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ISSUE 045

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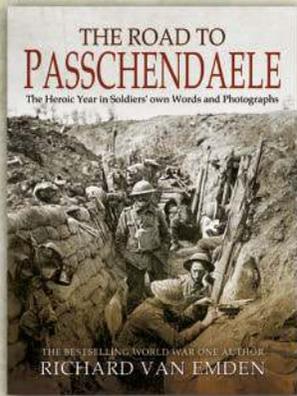




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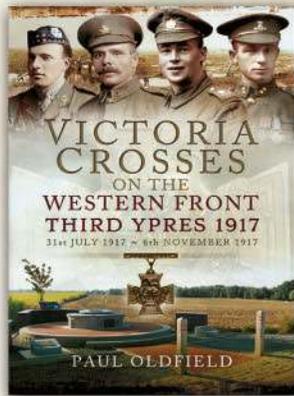
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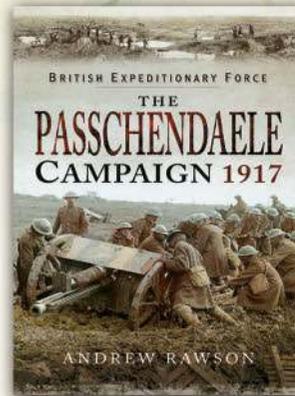
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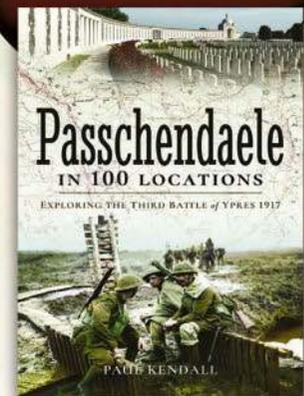
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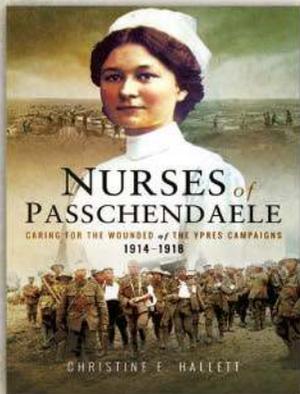
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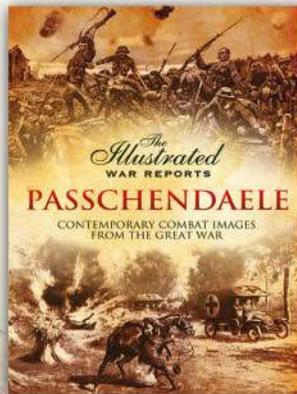
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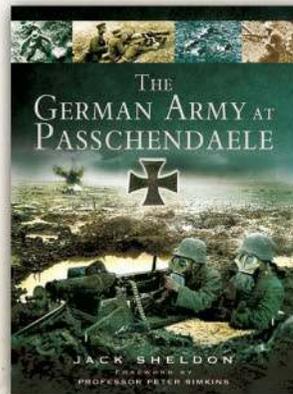
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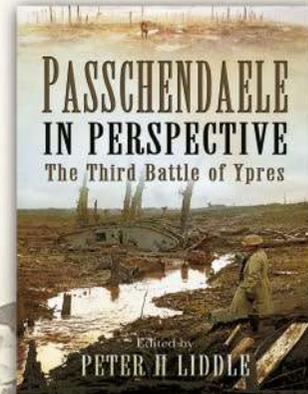
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PEN & SWORD BOOKS LTD

Welcome

“It’s very easy to take WWI out of context and view it as some meaningless tragedy that came from nowhere and ultimately meant nothing”

– Professor Mark Connelly, University of Kent

As we continue through the centenary years of WWI, it is humbling to read how the conflict not only directly affected the world in terms of sheer human cost, but also how it has re-shaped our culture during the many decades since.

To commemorate 100 years since the Third Battle of Ypres, we explore both the tragic stories of the men who fought in the campaign, and the broader impact it still has right up to the modern day.

While the question ‘was it worth it?’ may seem hopelessly vague or even glib, by attempting to answer we can gain a greater

understanding of this undeniably brutal campaign, the wider global conflict and maybe even the many other wars that have followed.



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Editor



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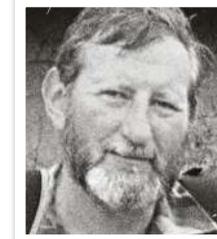
TOM GARNER

Never one to shy away from the tragic stories in military history, this month Tom not only tackled Passchendaele with two in-depth interviews (p.28) he also spoke with veteran Norman Lewis, who witnessed the aftermath of Hiroshima (p.76)



JONATHAN KRAUSE

Was Passchendaele really a futile disaster? Did the French mutinies of 1917 force the British into an impossible offensive? Oxford researcher Jonathan takes a look at the context for the battle and the debate surrounding it (p.40).



AL VENTER

In Part II of Africa’s Mercenary Missions, Al recounts the perilous operation to close down the rebel-controlled diamond mines during Angola’s ongoing civil war, fighting through thick jungle in hardy armoured vehicles (p.60)

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Wounded soldiers gathered after the Battle of Menin Road Ridge, part of the Third Battle of Ypres

PASSCHENDAELE

1917-2017

28 Explore the mud, blood, sacrifice and debate behind the Third Battle of Ypres



Frontline

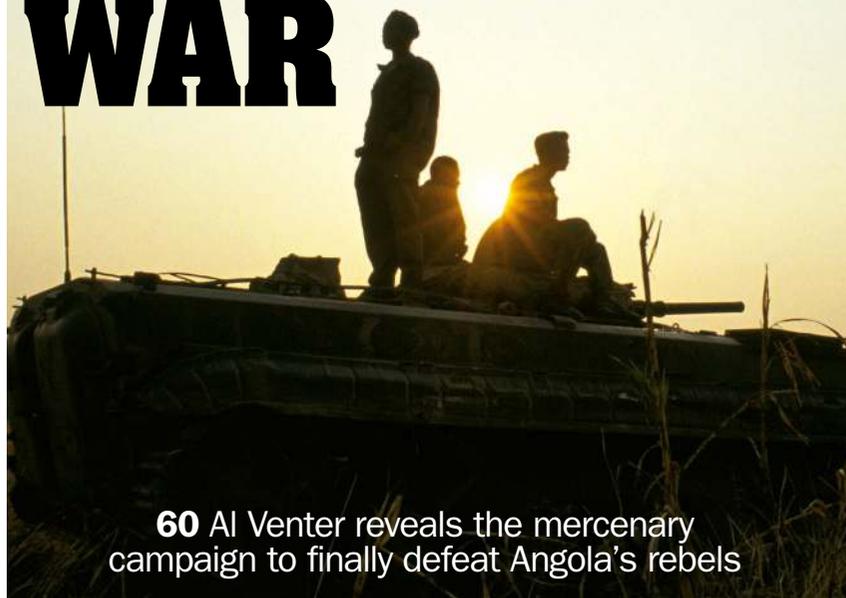
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A Roundhead standard on display in London

CHARLEMAGNE
44 How Europe's emperor carved his realm out with the sword

WARⁱⁿ FOCUS

LA VICTOIRE

Taken: 14 July, 1919

French tanks participate in the Bastille Day military parade, which in 1919 also celebrated the recent victory of France and her allies in the Great War. Contingents from every Allied nation took part in the parade in the centre of Paris on a route that would be replicated 11 years later by occupying German forces.









WARⁱⁿ **FOCUS**

COLUMN UNDER ATTACK

Taken: c. July 1942

A British infantryman crouches as a German bomb hits a nearby supply column during the Western Desert Campaign of 1942. This photograph was taken just a month after the fall of Tobruk, during the Battle of Gazala, and in the same month as the crucial British victory in the First Battle of El Alamein.

WAR_{in} **FOCUS**

HAVING A BLAST

Taken: 24 June, 2016

US Army soldiers shoot rounds from an M1A1 Abrams battle tank during a live-fire tank shoot exercise at the Novo Selo Training Area in eastern Bulgaria. Various iterations of the Abrams have been deployed by the US Army since the Eighties, and the tank proved highly effective in combat when deployed during Operation Desert Storm, in 1991.





WARⁱⁿ FOCUS

THE LAST DEFENCE

Taken: c. 1975

South Vietnamese soldiers pictured during North Vietnam's Spring Offensive, 1975. The swiftness with which Communist forces were able to invade the south of the country took the Saigon government and its allies by surprise. By April that year, the capital finally fell to the NVA, and was renamed Ho Chi Minh City in honour of the late President of North Vietnam.





TIMELINE OF...

THE EIGHTY YEARS' WAR

Otherwise known as the 'Dutch Revolt', this decades-long conflict saw the Netherlands successfully break free from Spanish rule

"THE SPANISH SUBSEQUENTLY INFLECTED ONE OF THE LONGEST AND BLOODIEST SIEGES IN WORLD HISTORY"

13 March 1567 and 23 May 1568

BATTLES OF OOSTERWEEL AND HEILIGERLEE

After decades of Dutch Protestant discontent against Spanish Catholic rule, a revolt broke out when the Duke of Alba led an army into Brussels. The first Battle at Oosterweel was a Spanish victory but the rebels gained a victory at Heiligerlee.



Heiligerlee was the first Dutch rebel victory, but it would take 80 years of periodic conflict before independence was finally won

1573-74

SIEGE OF LEIDEN

The Duke of Alba's 60,000 strong Spanish army inflicted many atrocities on the Dutch, but it only strengthened their resolve to resist. At Leiden, the Spanish twice besieged the city, but a relief force of Protestant privateers eventually forced their retreat.



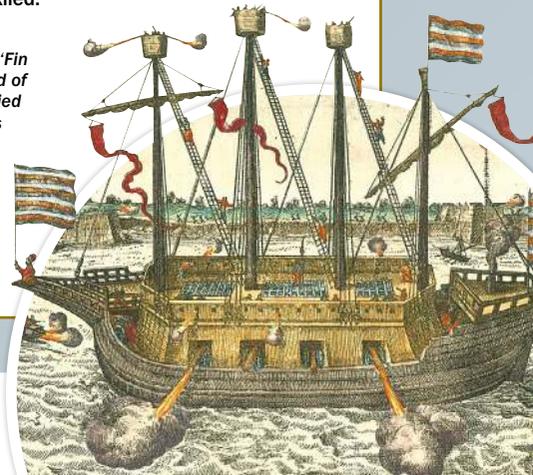
The starving citizens subsequently feasted on mashed carrots, onions and potatoes, which reputedly became the origin of the traditional Dutch dish 'hutspot'

July 1584 - August 1585

SIEGE OF ANTWERP

The Spanish Duke of Parma besieged the rebel-held port of Antwerp, which was then the most important city in the Netherlands. Parma constructed forts and bridges to cut the rebels off and despite heavy resistance the city was taken. The majority of Antwerp's citizens were exiled.

The Dutch vessel 'Fin de la Guerre' ('End of War') was a fortified ship that acted as a floating castle. It was designed to break the Spanish blockade of Antwerp but it quickly ran aground



SIEGE OF OSTEND

The Dutch United Provinces attempted to hold on to their only ruling province in Flanders at Ostend. The Spanish subsequently inflicted one of the longest and bloodiest sieges in world history and eventually forced the Dutch out at great cost.



With at least 90,000 casualties, it was said that "the Spanish assailed the unassailable and the Dutch defended the indefensible"



'The Surrender of Breda' by Diego Velázquez. The painting is considered to be one of the Spanish painter's best works in its historical accuracy and humane themes

SIEGE OF BREDA

Fighting resumed in 1621 and Maurice of Nassau could not stop the Spanish, under Ambrogio Spinola, from taking the fortified and strategically located Dutch city of Breda. It was, however, one of the last major Spanish victories of the war.

BATTLE OF THE DOWNS

After the logistical "Spanish Road" to the Netherlands was cut off by the French, the Spanish attempted to bring reinforcements by sea. Their fleet, however, was decisively defeated by the Dutch off the English coast.

The crushing of the Spanish fleet was a significant moment in the ascendancy of the Dutch Republic as a great naval power



5 July 1601 – 20 September 1604

28 August 1624-5

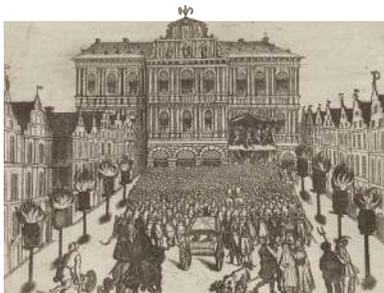
21 October 1639

1609-21

30 January 1648

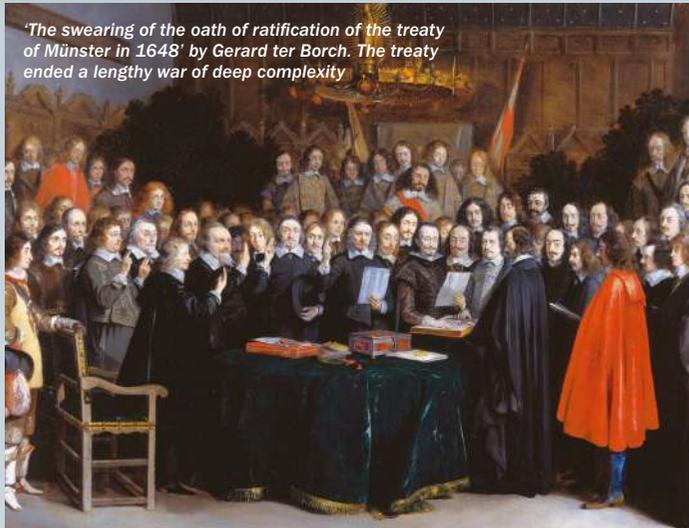
TWELVE YEARS' TRUCE

By 1609, the war had reached a stalemate. The Spanish agreed to a truce that acknowledged the republican United Provinces as independent, but without formally recognising their sovereignty. Before hostilities resumed the republic was officially recognised by other powers, commerce expanded and Dutch Protestantism was consolidated.



The publication of the truce at Antwerp City Hall. The truce was declared with trumpet players and burning tar barrels illuminating the square in front of the hall

'The swearing of the oath of ratification of the treaty of Münster in 1648' by Gerard ter Borch. The treaty ended a lengthy war of deep complexity



PEACE OF MUNSTER

After two years of negotiations, the Dutch Republic's national sovereignty was finally recognised by Habsburg Spain. The resulting treaty preceded the peace that ended the Thirty Years' War the same year, and finally ended the Eighty Years' War.

Images: Alamy

REVOLT ACROSS THE CONTINENT

The Eighty Years' War was fought across the Low Countries, with major events occurring not just in the modern Netherlands, but also Belgium and parts of western Germany

1 CAPTURE OF BRIELLE

1 APRIL 1572 BRIELLE, SOUTH HOLLAND, NETHERLANDS

'Sea Beggars' under the command of William van der Marck capture the undefended Spanish garrison at Brielle on April Fools' Day. This is a huge boost to Dutch morale.



Left: The Siege of Alkmaar is notable turning point in the war for being the first Dutch rebel city to overcome a besieging Spanish army

2 SIEGE OF ALKMAAR

21 AUGUST - 8 OCTOBER 1573 ALKMAAR, NORTH HOLLAND, NETHERLANDS

A Spanish army led by the Duke of Alba's son besieges Alkmaar, but the Dutch breach the dikes around the city. The Spanish cannot continue the siege and are forced to withdraw.

3 BATTLE OF MOOKERHEYDE

14 APRIL 1574 MOOK EN MIDDELAAR, LIMBURG, NETHERLANDS

Spanish forces break off from the Siege of Leiden to defeat a relieving Dutch army under Louis of Nassau. Louis and his brother Henry are both killed along with thousands of their men, and the siege continues.



Left: The Battle of Gembloux was a disaster for the Dutch rebels and set back the march towards independence

4 BATTLE OF GEMBOUX

31 JANUARY 1578 GEMBOUX, NAMUR, BELGIUM

The Duke of Parma and John of Austria lead a Spanish army to a decisive victory over a Dutch army that is withdrawing towards Brussels. The Spanish are able to regain control of much of the southern Netherlands.

SIEGE OF HAARLEM

11 DECEMBER 1572-13 JULY 1573

HAARLEM, NORTH HOLLAND, NETHERLANDS

SIEGE OF MIDDELBURG

4 NOVEMBER 1572-18 FEBRUARY 1574

MIDDELBURG, ZEELAND, NETHERLANDS

SIEGE OF HULST

1645

HULST, ZEELAND, NETHERLANDS

BATTLE OF THE SLAAK

12-13 SEPTEMBER 1631

SLAAK OF VOLKERAK CHANNEL, NEAR GOEREE-OVERFLAKKEE, SOUTH HOLLAND, NETHERLANDS

BATTLE OF THE DOWNS

21 OCTOBER 1639

THE DOWNS (ENGLISH CHANNEL)

SIEGE OF ANTWERP

JULY 1584-AUGUST 1585

ANTWERP, BELGIUM

BATTLE OF FLEURUS

29 AUGUST 1622

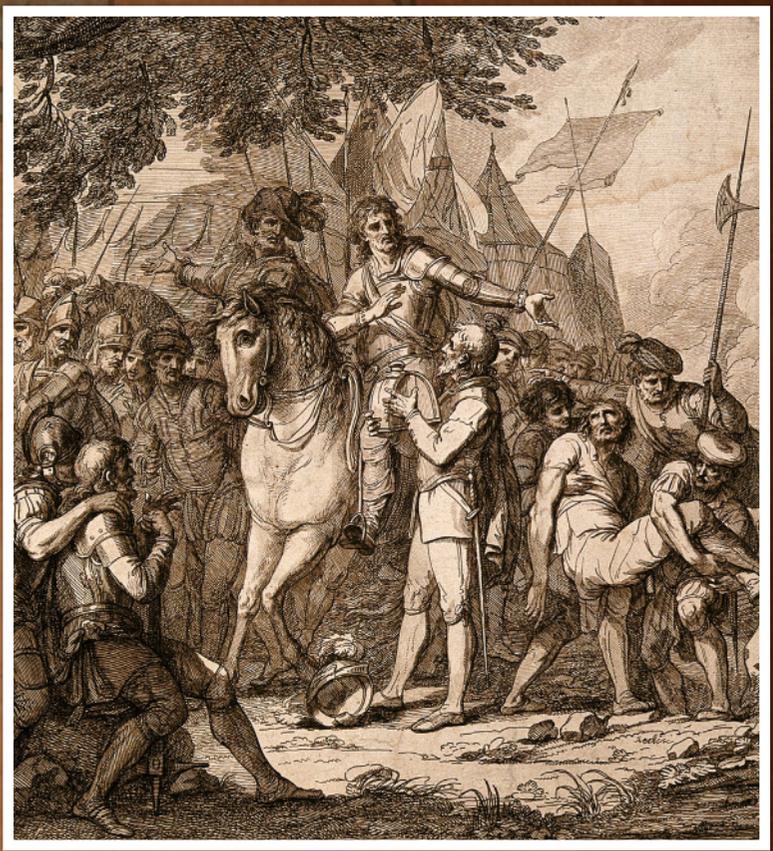
FLEURUS, HAINAUT, BELGIUM

BATTLE OF OOSTERWEEL

13 MARCH 1567

OOSTERWEEL, NEAR ANTWERP, BELGIUM

Right: Although the English take part in more successful actions to assist the Dutch, Zutphen becomes the most well known because it results in the death of the Elizabethan poet Sir Philip Sidney



BATTLE OF HEILIGERLEE
23 MAY 1568
HEILIGERLEE, GRONINGEN, NETHERLANDS

BATTLE OF JEMMINGEN
21 JULY 1568
JEMGUM, LOWER SAXONY, GERMANY

SIEGE OF 'S-HERTOGENBOSCH
30 APRIL-14 SEPTEMBER 1629
'S-HERTOGENBOSCH, NORTH BRABANT, NETHERLANDS

SIEGE OF KNODSBURG
21-25 JULY 1591
KNODSBURG, BETUWE, GELDERLAND, NETHERLANDS

5
CAPTURE OF ARNHEM
6-15 OCTOBER 1585
ARNHEM, GELDERLAND, NETHERLANDS

SIEGE OF NIJMEGEN
17-21 OCTOBER 1591
NIJMEGEN, GELDERLAND, NETHERLANDS

3
SIEGE OF EINDHOVEN
7 FEBRUARY-23 APRIL 1583
EINDHOVEN, NORTH BRABANT, NETHERLANDS

SIEGE OF JÜLICH
5 SEPTEMBER 1621-3 FEBRUARY 1622
JÜLICH, NORTH RHINE WESTPHALIA, GERMANY

GERMANY

NETHERLANDS

5 BATTLE OF ZUTPHEN

22 SEPTEMBER 1586 ZUTPHEN, GELDERLAND, NETHERLANDS
A largely English force led by Robert Dudley, Earl of Leicester intercepts a Spanish relief column en route to the Siege of Zutphen. Leicester is forced to retire after suffering considerable losses.

6 BATTLE OF NIEUWPOORT

2 JULY 1600 NIEUWPOORT, WEST FLANDERS, BELGIUM
Archduke Albrecht of Austria consolidates Spanish control of the southern Netherlands, but Maurice of Nassau defeats him at Nieuwpoort in a famous, but hard-fought Dutch victory.

7 SIEGE OF SLUIS

19 MAY - 19 AUGUST 1604 SLUIS, ZEELAND, NETHERLANDS
An Anglo-Dutch force under Maurice of Nassau and Horace Vere crosses the Scheldt estuary and takes the town of Sluis after tough fighting. The victory enables the Dutch to annex Spanish East Flanders.

8 SIEGE OF OSTEND

5 JULY 1601 - 20 SEPTEMBER 1604
OSTEND, WEST FLANDERS, BELGIUM
Described as a "long carnival of death", the siege is one of the bloodiest events of the war that lasts for over three years and results in the death. The total losses for both sides are at least 90,000 casualties.

Right: Because of its intense nature the Siege of Ostend is nicknamed "Krijgsuniversiteit" ("University of War") or "New Troy" by soldiers who served there



Images: FreeVectorMaps

THE BATTLE OF NIEUWPOORT

In a rare open-field battle for Maurice of Nassau, Dutch forces only narrowly escape complete annihilation by the Spanish

The strategic situation in 1600 was promising for the Dutch. The Netherlands had been split, with the northern provinces declaring their independence while the southern remained loyal to Spain. Maurice of Nassau had taken over military leadership of the Dutch Revolt from his father, the assassinated William of Orange, and he was earning a glowing reputation.

Spain, meanwhile, was distracted by commitments elsewhere and found its treasury strained to breaking point and beyond. An inability to pay its mercenary troops had led to frequent mutinies, while the loss of the Armada in 1588 had been a devastating financial blow.

A further Spanish mutiny convinced Johan van Oldenbarnevelt, the dominant political figure in the northern provinces, that more daring military operations could be undertaken, and ordered

Maurice to capture the town of Dunkirk. Maurice, seeing the risk of the Dutch field army being destroyed, was firmly against the idea, but had little choice but to acquiesce.

Maurice's concern was not misplaced – the Spanish mutiny ended with perfect timing and the Dutch plan was too ambitious. Landing his army behind Spanish forces and then marching on Dunkirk, Maurice's army fell behind schedule and was overhauled by the Spanish under Archduke Albert, governor general of the Habsburg Netherlands.

Having no choice but to turn and fight, Maurice ordered a rearguard to delay the Spanish while his main army prepared for battle, but this rearguard, including a Scottish regiment, was wiped out.

At half past three on the afternoon of 2 July 1600, the two armies faced each other across the sand dunes, with roughly equal numbers.

“THE SITUATION FOR MAURICE WAS NOW DIRE, AND THE ANNIHILATION HE HAD FEARED WAS A VERY REAL POSSIBILITY – WITH HIS LINE OF RETREAT CUT OFF, THERE WOULD BE NO ESCAPE IF HIS ARMY BROKE ENTIRELY”

Maurice of Nassau looks on as the Battle of Nieuwpoort rages in the dunes behind him



CLASH OF NATIONS

AS WAS COMMON IN THE WARS OF THE PERIOD, FOREIGN TROOPS MADE UP SIGNIFICANT PROPORTIONS OF BOTH ARMIES AT NIEUWPOORT

Although it is tempting to view the Eighty Years' War as exclusively a clash between Dutch and Spanish, the reality of warfare in the period was that many nations poured men into the struggle, whether officially, as allied forces, or unofficially, in the form of mercenaries.

Maurice's army at Nieuwpoort included a sizeable English volunteer contingent, which was considered something of an elite and entrusted with the centre of the line, but there were also Scottish, German, Swiss and Walloon (Belgian) soldiers present as well. There were Germans and Walloons in the Spanish army also, alongside Italians, Irishmen, Burundians and, of course, Spaniards. (The Spanish king was not averse to digging deep for men, at one time forming a tercio comprised of Catalan criminals, although these colourful characters did not feature at Nieuwpoort.)

Motivation to join a foreign army was sometimes simply a matter of finding employment, with professionals willing to hire themselves out by the campaign. In the Eighty Years' War, with its strong religious element, there were often deeper motives. Maurice's army was almost exclusively Protestant, with many of his foreign soldiers enlisting specifically to fight the Catholic Habsburgs. Likewise, the men in the army of Archduke Albert were mostly fervent Catholics.

Right: Johannes Wtenbogaert, a converted Catholic priest who prayed before the Dutch army prior to the Battle of Nieuwpoort

The battle would become a test of Maurice's new tactics, with the Spanish tercios matched against his more modern dispositions.

An English element, commanded by Francis Vere, held the centre of the Dutch line, with Maurice positioning his artillery to provide support from both flanks. The Spanish assault was hampered by the fact that discipline had still not been fully restored after the recent mutiny – several of the Spanish regiments were unruly.

Maurice made good use of his heavy cavalry to scatter the lighter Spanish horsemen, but infantry units then turned the tables on the Dutch, sending them reeling with severe casualties. Elsewhere, the English infantry started the battle well, advancing on their Spanish opponents and utilising Maurice's new infantry tactics, but when they closed with two Spanish tercios they found themselves overmatched and were pushed backwards. When reinforcements failed to arrive in time, the English broke.

The situation for Maurice was now dire, and the annihilation he had feared was a very real possibility – with his line of retreat cut off, there would be no escape if his army broke entirely. Yet there was very little left for him to do, as he had only a tiny cavalry reserve, of around 240, available to throw into the battle.

The only glimmer of hope lay with the fact that the Spaniards were advancing very slowly to exploit their success against the English, and

in their fatigue, they had become disorganised. Maurice played the last card in his hand and unleashed his reserve cavalry, which was stunningly successful. The exhausted Spanish were sent into a retreat from which they could not recover. Rallying English units and the third line of Dutch infantry pushed forward and a final charge by the remnants of the Dutch cavalry proved decisive. The Spanish, who had seemed on the verge of a great victory, fell into a headlong retreat.

Losses were fairly heavy on both sides, with around 2,000 Dutch casualties (including losses from the early clash of the Dutch rearguard with the advancing Spanish) and around 2,500 Spanish. Approximately 600 Spanish troops were taken prisoner, including their second-in-command, Francisco Hurtado de Mendoza.

The Dutch aim of taking Dunkirk was foiled, making the battle nothing but a tactical victory, and a narrow one at that. The battered army fell back on Ostend, where it reboarded its ships to return home. Moreover, the near disaster convinced the Dutch to avoid open battle wherever possible in the future, relying instead on sieges and naval activity.

Left: Albert VII, Archduke of Austria, sovereign of the Habsburg Netherlands and commander of Spanish forces



WEAPONS & EQUIPMENT

A look at the firearms that began to replace traditional weapons, such as the pike

The introduction of gunpowder had slowly transformed the battlefield by the time of the Eighty Years' War. The arquebus was a fairly primitive handgun but still retained its place in early 17th century armies alongside the heavier musket. The perfect ratio of arquebus, musket and pike was a major quest of the period, with firearms gradually taking over as their sophistication increased.

The wheellock pistol was still an important part of a cavalrman's armament at the start of the 17th century

WHELLOCK CAVALRY PISTOL

The pistol had become the main weapon of the cavalry of the period, used in the elaborate firing ritual known as the 'caracole', where ranks of cavalrmen would trot up to an enemy, fire, and retire to reload. Such tactics were soon to become obsolete as military innovation transformed the battlefield.

"THE PERFECT RATIO OF ARQUEBUS, MUSKET AND PIKE WAS A MAJOR QUEST"

★ WHELLOCK MECHANISM

An early improvement on the arquebus saw the wheellock firing mechanism introduced around 1500, using a steel wheel to generate a spark rather than a permanently burning match.

17TH CENTURY ARQUEBUS

Invented around 1475, the arquebus was still a potent weapon more than a century later. Simple to manufacture, it originally used a burning match to ignite its charge (hence 'matchlock'). It was gradually superseded by the more powerful musket.

Images: Alamy, Getty

★ TRIGGER GUARD

The arquebus was fired by a familiar trigger, protected by a guard to prevent accidental discharge during the lengthy loading procedure.

BANDOLIER

In the stress of combat, measuring out an accurate charge of powder could be difficult, so having ready-made measures on hand was a distinct advantage. Kept in wooden flasks (12 was the usual number) and suspended across the chest on a leather strap, a bandolier helped musketeers and arquebusiers reload with greater efficiency.

Prepared measures of powder allowed arquebusiers to achieve a greater rate of fire on the battlefield

BODY ARMOUR

Armour was still a major feature on the battlefields of the period, with both infantry and cavalry alike wearing a variety of protective pieces. Pikemen wore visorless helmets and a cuirass, while cavalry also wore breastplates.

A cavalry cuirass, or breastplate, the effectiveness of which often limited the impact of the outmoded 'caracole'



Left: Although gradually being phased out, the 18-foot pike remained an integral part of European armies until the end of the 17th century

THE PIKE

An ancient weapon, the pike was still clinging to relevance during the Dutch Revolt, although it was steadily being replaced by firearms as their reliability improved. In 1599, Dutch reforms stipulated that only 38 per cent of each company should be comprised of pikemen.

★ BARREL
The arquebus did not require a rest to aim and fire. Even so, some soldiers were tempted to lighten their load by shortening the barrel of their arquebus, which would result in a stiff fire if discovered.

★ AMMUNITION
An arquebus barrel would be octagonal in section and, by the opening of the 17th century, usually fired a lead ball. (Iron balls had been used earlier.)

Below: The size and weight of the musket meant it had to be rested on a fork (or 'furket') when firing

"THE MUSKET WAS LONGER AND HEAVIER THAN THE ARQUEBUS AND PACKED A HEFTIER PUNCH"

MUSKET

The musket was longer and heavier than the arquebus and packed a heftier punch thanks to its larger calibre. In an age where soldiers still routinely wore body armour, the extra impact of the musket was highly valued.



FATHER OF THE 'MILITARY REVOLUTION'

Was Maurice of Nassau the key figure in the transformation of the European battlefield?

The Eighty Years' War took place in the middle of a period of dramatic change on the battlefield – so dramatic, that some historians have called it a 'military revolution'. Maurice of Nassau, the preeminent general in the Dutch army, has been singled out as a prime mover in this revolutionary period, but his importance, and indeed the very existence of a military revolution, has been hotly debated.

In 1955, the historian Michael Roberts delivered a lecture at Queen's University Belfast, in which he claimed that the period 1560-1660 had witnessed a revolution in military tactics, which had then spilled over into strategy and even influenced the development of nation states in Europe. The towering figure in Roberts' version of history was Maurice of Nassau. The problem of how to combine the new gunpowder weaponry with existing, close-action weapons like pikes, was at the heart of the transformation. As firearms became more

powerful, reliable and easy to use, they inevitably took over from the ancient weaponry of the Middle Ages.

All armies were experimenting with how best to combine the different arms, but it was Maurice who added a revolutionary twist. Ironically, he did so by harking back to the days of ancient Rome and reintroducing linear formations to the battlefield. In an age dominated by the massive pike formations of the Spanish tercios, Maurice organised his men into smaller units, with fewer ranks. In 1599, he set the relative numbers of each type of infantry arm down on paper – 37 per cent arquebus, 25 per cent musket and 38 per cent pike.

Inevitably, many companies failed to reach these ideal distributions and some leeway was allowed, but great disparities would prevent the companies from operating in the highly disciplined manner Maurice envisioned. Drill, in Maurice's eyes, was essential for the smooth performance of a company in battle and he wanted all of his units to be able to produce the same levels of performance. Manuals were duly printed, which detailed all of the new manoeuvres and the stages needed to efficiently load and fire a musket.

Along with efforts to standardise weaponry and limit the number of artillery calibres in use, Maurice's reforms introduced a new air of professionalism to the military world. Despite these improvements in the art of waging war, other historians have questioned their overall impact and many are not convinced that the term 'revolution' is applicable to a range of developments that took decades or even centuries to unfold. For some, it was Gustavus Adolphus of Sweden who really transformed the battlefield, taking Maurice's shallow,

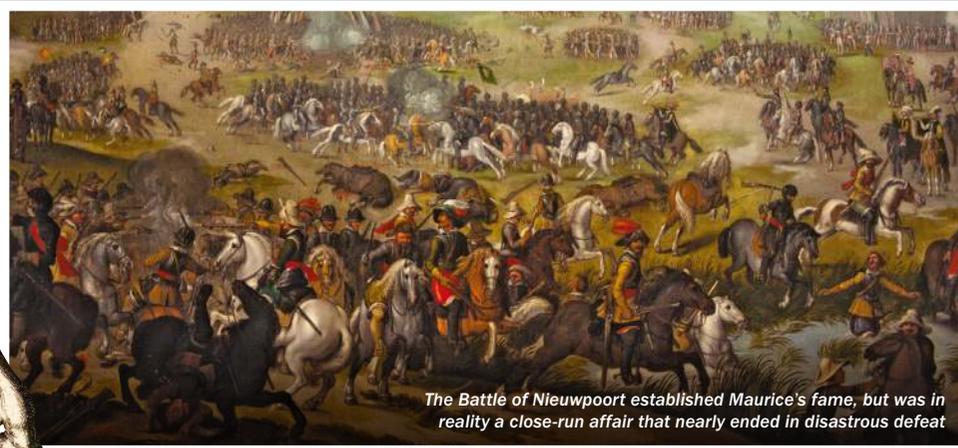
linear formations and unleashing them on the offensive rather than the mainly defensive implementation of Maurice himself.

What is undeniable, however, is the subtle change in the nature of soldiers themselves imposed by Maurice's reforms. More officers were needed to handle his smaller units and more initiative was needed and encouraged among the officer class on the battlefield. This trickled down even into the ranks. In Roberts' words: "The army was no longer to be a brute mass, in the Swiss style, nor a collection of bellicose individuals, in the feudal style; it was to be an articulated organism of which each part responded to impulses from above."

The results were modest. Maurice was most adept at managing sieges and struggled when he fought open battles, such as Nieuwpoort (believed to have seen one of the first employments of volley fire). He could occasionally even seem to be behind the times, especially in his insistence on 37 per cent of his companies being armed with the arquebus, when his company captains were pressing for the musket to take over all missile-weapon duties. By 1600, English companies had largely dispensed with the arquebus, which would soon disappear from the battlefield entirely.

It is also the case that the most transformational elements of the proposed military revolution were not to appear until after Maurice's death. The introduction of uniforms, marching in step, the disappearance of the pike from the battlefield (the bayonet allowing a musketeer to fulfil both roles) all came later in the 17th century. But if the existence of a military revolution is accepted, then Maurice certainly deserves recognition for his role in helping to get it started.

Left: An engraving depicts a heroic-looking Maurice in battle dress



The Battle of Nieuwpoort established Maurice's fame, but was in reality a close-run affair that nearly ended in disastrous defeat



HISTORIC PHOTOGRAPHER OF THE YEAR AWARDS 2017

Win £2,500 & a chance to go down in history in the first awards of their kind

Launched on 4 July this year, the first annual Historic Photographer of the Year Awards invites history lovers, photographers and enthusiasts to demonstrate their passion for the past. Whether it's snapping a crumbling Anglo-Saxon chapel, or a looming Mayan monument, the awards are looking for sensational photography of any historical subject with a fascinating story to tell.

Among those judging the entries will be *All About History* magazine Editor-in-Chief James Hoare; David Gilbert, Chair of Creative United;

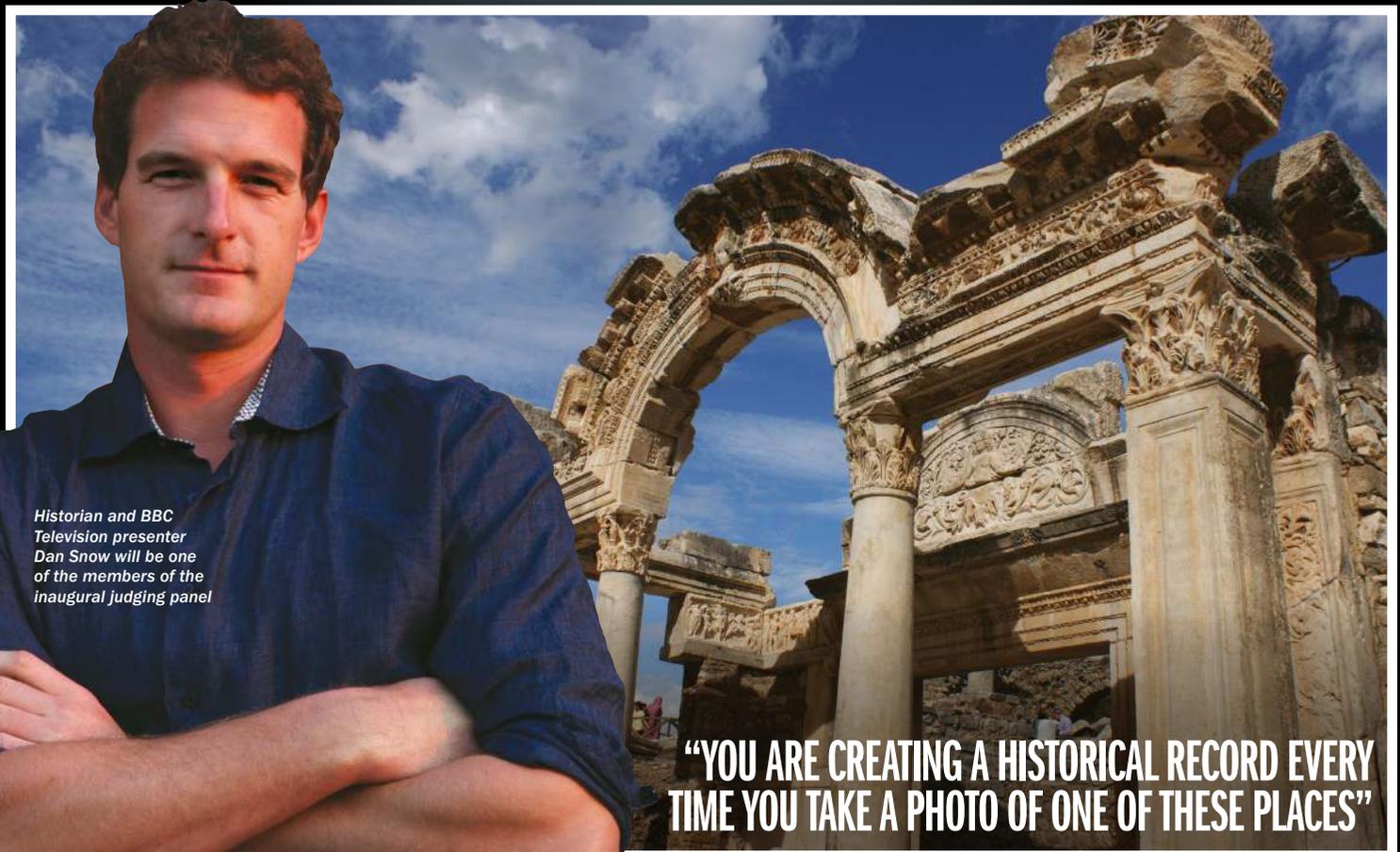
and Dan Snow, historian and broadcaster. "As a judge I'm just excited to see what comes in," said Snow. "You are creating a historical record every time you take a photo of one of these places. But also I think it's about inspiring people to understand that these beautiful places are our heritage. We should preserve them and cherish them, as they are good for us and they're good for our understanding of ourselves."

Snow's highly successful podcast *History Hit*, and *Trip Historic*, a leading online travel guide to the major historic sites of the world, founded the

awards, which are also supported by *HISTORY*, The Royal Photographic Society, and *All About History* magazine.

The winning photograph will be judged on originality, composition and technical proficiency, as well as the historical impact of the subject and the story it has to tell. There will also be a People's Choice award, with a prize of £250, and the closing date for submissions will be midnight on 26 September 2017.

For more information, as well as the rules for entry and even some tips from the judging panel, visit photographer.triphistoric.com.



Historian and BBC Television presenter Dan Snow will be one of the members of the inaugural judging panel

"YOU ARE CREATING A HISTORICAL RECORD EVERY TIME YOU TAKE A PHOTO OF ONE OF THESE PLACES"

HEAD TO HEAD

Although pikemen, arquebusiers and musketeers featured on both sides during the Eighty Years' War, the Dutch were beginning to revolutionise the way they were deployed

DUTCH ARQUEBUSIER

LOYALTY: DUTCH REPUBLIC YEARS IN OPERATION: 1568-1609

TRAINING

The drills instigated by Maurice of Nassau ensured that his infantry were extremely well prepared for the rigours of combat. Volley firing and battlefield manoeuvres became critical to the army's success.

DISCIPLINE

The missile troops of all armies needed to keep a cool head under pressure, but the rigorous training undertaken by the Dutch, and the increased number of officers controlling them, enhanced discipline.

WEAPONRY

The arquebus was a weapon on its way out (it was phased out of the Dutch Army by 1609), but it had played an important part in revolutionising the conduct of warfare.

DEFENSIVE STRENGTH

Arquebusiers and musketeers alike needed to remain close to pike formations to protect themselves against opposing infantry and cavalry, but their firepower was often enough to keep an enemy at bay.

OFFENSIVE CAPABILITY

Although still in the early stages, the battlefield was slowly being handed over to firearms. Better rates of fire and reliability had already improved the arquebus and the process would continue with the musket.

TOTAL



REVOLUTIONARY TACTICS

Maurice of Nassau implemented a firing-by-ranks system that allowed his arquebusiers to keep up an almost constant fire. Arranged in ten ranks, the front row would aim and fire, before marching to the back of the formation. The next rank could then fire in turn. By the time the first rank was back at the front of the company, it would have reloaded. Gustavus Adolphus of Sweden built on these reforms, introducing paper cartridges and thinning the number of ranks to six as reloading times improved.

Left: Gustavus Adolphus, King of Sweden, who built upon Maurice of Nassau's infantry reforms





Left: At Rocroi, in 1643, French field artillery fatally weakened Spanish tercio formations



THE PIKEMEN'S FINAL STAND

Although decried by some historians as symbolic of Spanish military stagnation by the opening of the 17th Century, the tercio had originally been an innovative method of combining pikemen and arquebusiers. For a century, from roughly 1550 to 1650, it was a dominant feature on the European military landscape and only slowly conceded ground to the upstart musketeers. The invention of mobile field artillery, able to blow holes in the tightly packed ranks of pikemen, was the tercio's true death-knell.

SPANISH TERCIO PIKEMAN

LOYALTY: SPAIN YEARS IN OPERATION: 1534–C.1660

TRAINING

..... ★

The heart of the tercios was made up of professional, highly trained troops. An ability to handle the cumbersome 18-foot pike and stamina to get through protracted battles were essential.

DEFENSIVE STRENGTH

..... ★

Packed into dense formations a thousand or more strong (theoretically a 3,000-man formation), the tercio was well able to defend itself, especially against cavalry.

DISCIPLINE

..... ★

The tercio relied entirely on its men standing firm, so indiscipline would be catastrophic, but at the time of the Eighty Years' War, frequent mutinies had undermined discipline in the Spanish forces.

OFFENSIVE CAPABILITY

..... ★

Not quite the slow-moving 'battlefield hedgehog' that artistic depictions might suggest, the tercio could move and engage its enemy offensively as well, with the clash and subsequent 'push of pike' determining many a battle.

WEAPONRY

..... ★

The pike would disappear from European battlefields by the end of the 17th Century, but during the Eighty Years' War it remained a formidable and highly effective weapon.

TOTAL



“THE TERCIO HAD ORIGINALLY BEEN AN INNOVATIVE METHOD OF COMBINING PIKEMEN AND ARQUEBUSIERS”

Illustrations: Jean-Michel Girard / The Art Agency

LEADERS & COMMANDERS

William was later nicknamed 'the Silent' because he reputedly kept quiet when the French king inadvertently let out secrets that the rebellious prince was not supposed to hear



WILLIAM I, PRINCE OF ORANGE 1533-84 DUTCH REPUBLIC THE 'SILENT' ARCHITECT OF INDEPENDENCE

William was an unlikely figurehead for the Dutch Revolt. Born in Germany as the Count of Nassau, he was a beneficiary of Spanish Habsburg rule and a ward of Emperor Charles V. Although Orange has become synonymous with the Dutch monarchy, it was actually a French principality that William inherited.

Philip II of Spain appointed William as stadtholder (steward) of the principal Dutch provinces of Holland, Zeeland and Utrecht in 1559 but he began to oppose his king over the issue of religion. William disagreed with Philip's persecution of Protestants and argued for freedom of religion for all people. When Dutch Calvinists began to vandalise Catholic churches, Philip sent an army commanded by the Duke of

Alba to the Low Countries in 1567 and the Eighty Years' War effectively began.

William was not a talented soldier and led several failed military expeditions against the Spanish from 1568, but he became a moderate Calvinist and reorganised the governments of his Dutch provinces. By 1574 he was able to relieve the Siege of Leiden and two years later he managed to persuade all provinces of the Low Countries to resist Spanish rule. This situation did not last due to religious differences and, in 1579, the Union of Utrecht united the Protestant northern provinces against the Catholic southern provinces that declared their loyalty to Philip. In time, this would create the modern states of the Netherlands and Belgium. The northern provinces officially declared themselves to be the 'Republic of the Seven United Netherlands', or 'Dutch Republic', in 1581.

Although William was often politically discredited during this period, he was the most prominent leader of the rebellion. Holland and Zeeland proclaimed him their count and effective sovereign, in 1584, while the Spanish renewed their campaign against the 'United Provinces'. William, however, was shot and assassinated in the same year by a Catholic Frenchman in Spanish pay. Nevertheless, his sons successfully continued the rebellion and Dutch independence was finally recognised in 1648.

"WILLIAM WAS NOT A TALENTED SOLDIER AND LED SEVERAL FAILED MILITARY EXPEDITIONS AGAINST THE SPANISH"

FERNANDO ÁLVAREZ DE TOLEDO, 3RD DUKE OF ALBA 1507-82 SPAIN THE SPANISH 'IRON DUKE'

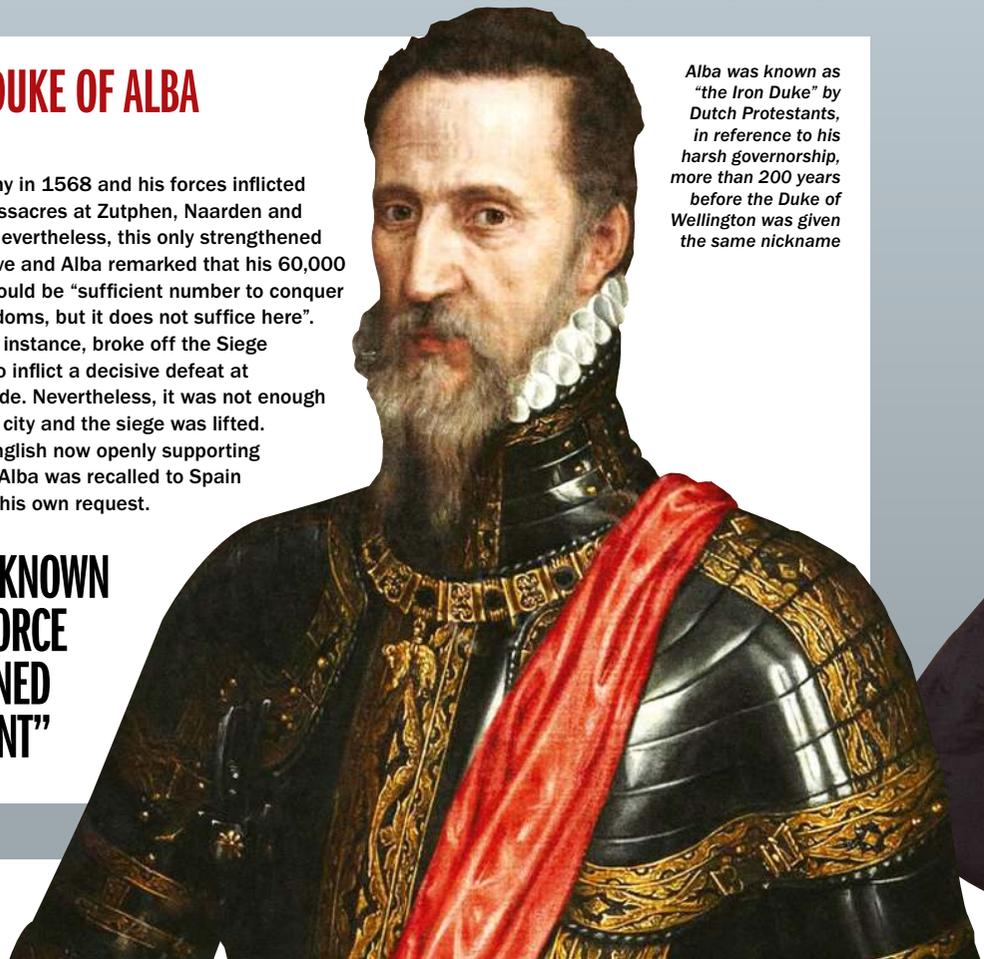
Alba had been given a military education and from 1531 he was a professional soldier who gained vast experience fighting across Europe and North Africa. He played a prominent part in the Habsburg victory against German Protestants, at the Battle of Mühlberg in 1547.

Alba was sent to the Spanish Netherlands as governor with a veteran army in 1567 to crush the growing rebellion against Habsburg rule. He established a notorious court known as the 'Council of Troubles', to enforce Roman Catholicism, which condemned thousands to death or imprisonment. Alba then defeated

a rebel army in 1568 and his forces inflicted horrific massacres at Zutphen, Naarden and Haarlem. Nevertheless, this only strengthened rebel resolve and Alba remarked that his 60,000 soldiers should be "sufficient number to conquer many kingdoms, but it does not suffice here".

Alba, for instance, broke off the Siege of Leiden to inflict a decisive defeat at Mookerheyde. Nevertheless, it was not enough to take the city and the siege was lifted. With the English now openly supporting the Dutch, Alba was recalled to Spain in 1573 at his own request.

Alba was known as "the Iron Duke" by Dutch Protestants, in reference to his harsh governorship, more than 200 years before the Duke of Wellington was given the same nickname



"HE ESTABLISHED A NOTORIOUS COURT KNOWN AS THE 'COUNCIL OF TROUBLES', TO ENFORCE ROMAN CATHOLICISM, WHICH CONDEMNED THOUSANDS TO DEATH OR IMPRISONMENT"

ALEXANDER FARNESE

1545-92 SPAIN
THE TENACIOUSLY PRAGMATIC
SOLDIER AND DIPLOMAT

Born into a family of papal mercenaries, Farnese fought at the Battle of Lepanto in 1571 before becoming governor of the Spanish Netherlands in 1578 after his pivotal role in ensuring the decisive Spanish victory at the Battle of Gembloux.

Unlike his predecessors, Farnese rejected fanaticism and was intellectually flexible, like William the Silent, but unlike his adversary he was a great soldier. He captured Maastricht and managed to restore peace in the southern provinces, although

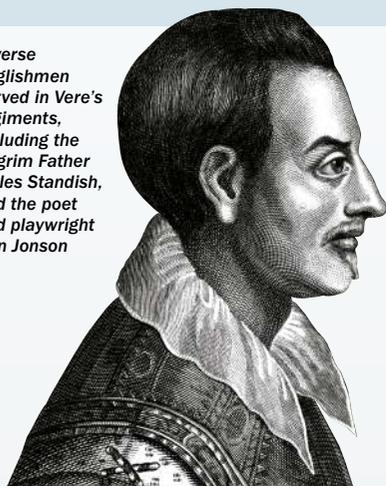
this was achieved with the removal of Spanish troops. Nevertheless, with only 15,000 local troops, he managed to achieve honourable surrenders from rebel garrisons.

Farnese was then granted 60,000 troops from Philip II and he set out to encircle the United Provinces. He subdued strategic towns such as Bruges and Ypres and launched an audacious siege at Antwerp. Using forts and pontoon bridges, the port surrendered after 13 months and the Catholic southern Netherlands was secured for Spain. Farnese became Duke of Parma but his last years were spent in illness and he died aged only 47.

Right: It is largely thanks to the military efforts of Farnese that modern Belgium was cut off from the northern Netherlands and it remains a predominantly Roman Catholic region



Diverse Englishmen served in Vere's regiments, including the Pilgrim Father Myles Standish, and the poet and playwright Ben Jonson



SIR FRANCIS VERE

1560-1609 ENGLAND THE MILITARILY GIFTED ENGLISH SUPPORTER OF THE DUTCH REPUBLIC

Thousands of English soldiers served in the Netherlands during the Eighty Years' War to assist their Dutch Protestant allies against a common Spanish enemy. One of the most distinguished was Francis Vere.

Vere first served as a mercenary in the early 1580s before joining the English army under the Earl of Leicester in the Netherlands. He took part in the Sieges of Sluys and Bergen-op-Zoom and his extreme courage caused him to be knighted on the battlefield.

By 1589, Vere was appointed sergeant-major-general (second-in-command) of all English forces in the Netherlands. Although his troop numbers declined, Vere worked closely with Maurice of Nassau and the pair won a great victory at the Siege of Knodsenburg in 1591. Their partnership was reflected in Vere's adoption of Maurice's military reforms among his own troops and the two men won another distinguished victory at the Battle of Nieuwpoort, in 1600, before Vere helped to lead the garrison at Ostend during its bloody siege. Vere remained fighting with the Dutch until 1604 and lived long enough to see the Dutch conclude the truce that virtually secured their independence.

MAURICE I, PRINCE OF ORANGE

1567-1625 DUTCH REPUBLIC THE BRILLIANT STRATEGIST AND MILITARY REFORMER

Known to history as 'Maurice of Nassau', this distinguished stadtholder was the son of William the Silent and became one of the greatest generals of the Eighty Years' War.

After his father's assassination in 1584, Maurice consolidated his position within the United Provinces and became commander-in-chief of the army. Using ideas from ancient generals, Maurice stated that he wanted his troops to be trained more Romano ("in the Roman way") and made them perform repetitive drills with pikes and muskets. New officers were trained to command smaller companies and soldiers were properly paid and equipped. The result was a flexible, strong army.

Maurice then studiously avoided pitched battles in favour of systematically taking enemy strongholds.

In a 20-year period, Maurice only deliberately fought two pitched battles, but the Spanish lines were pushed back far enough to resemble the modern territorial space of the Netherlands. Although he could not conquer the southern Netherlands, Maurice's actions enabled the Twelve Years' Truce that secured the frontiers of the Dutch Republic.



An Englishman noted that Maurice was, "Of great forwardness, good presence, courage and endued with a singular wit."

The English were resentful of Tromp's victory off their coastline and this bitterness may have eventually led to the outbreak of the First Anglo-Dutch War, in 1652

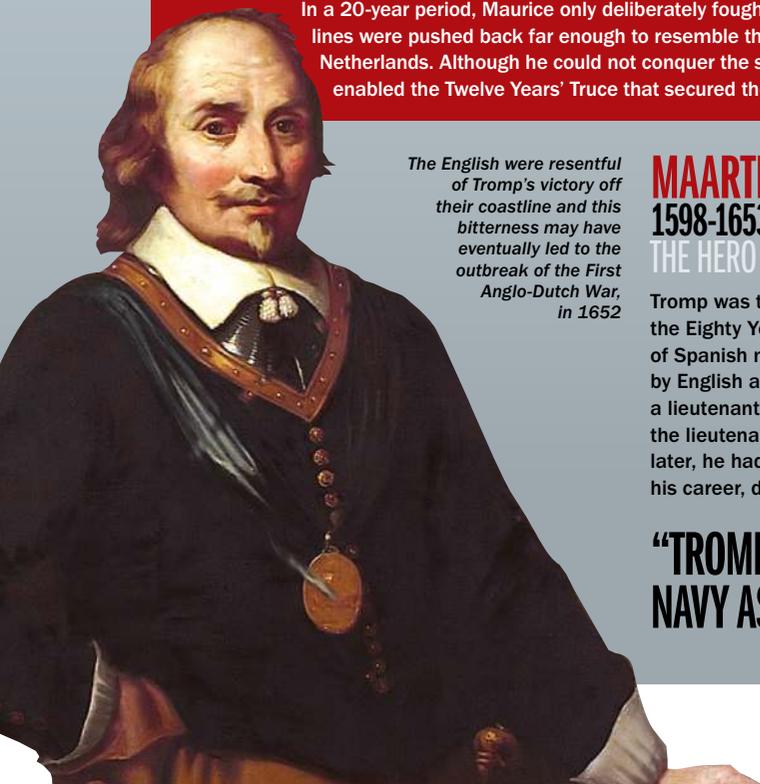
MAARTEN TROMP

1598-1653 DUTCH REPUBLIC
THE HERO OF THE BATTLE OF THE DOWNS

Tromp was the preeminent Dutch admiral of the Eighty Years' War and oversaw the decline of Spanish naval power. He was captured twice by English and Algerian pirates before he became a lieutenant in the Dutch Navy. By 1636, he was the lieutenant admiral of Holland and, three years later, he had the busiest, most glorious year of his career, during the Eighty Years' War.

In February 1639, Tromp defeated a force of Dunkirk privateers before meeting a large Spanish armada in September. This fleet was transporting 13,000 troops to Flanders and Tromp decided to attack and blockade the Spaniards off the English coast, at the Battle of the Downs. In the ensuing battle, the Spanish lost approximately 40 ships and 7,000 men, with Tromp's achievement marking the beginning of the Dutch Navy as a leading naval power. The victorious admiral became a national hero and when he died, in 1653, he was given a state funeral.

"TROMP'S ACHIEVEMENT MARKED THE BEGINNING OF THE DUTCH NAVY AS A LEADING NAVAL POWER"



100 years ago the Ypres Salient was consumed by a battle that became a byword for the futility of industrialised warfare

PASSCHENDAELE

1917-2017

WORDS TOM GARNER

In August 1917, a German artilleryman called Gerhard Gurtler wrote a letter home. Even though he was not in the front line, he had been unable to escape the thunderous apocalypse that had consumed the salient around Ypres. "Darkness alternates with light as bright as day. The earth trembles and shakes like a jelly... And those men who are still in the front line hear nothing but the drum-fire, the groaning of wounded comrades, the screaming of fallen horses, the wild beating of their own hearts, hour after hour, night after night. Even during the short respite granted them, their exhausted brains are haunted in the weird stillness by recollections of unlimited suffering. They have no way of escape, nothing is left to them but ghastly memories and resigned anticipation. The battlefield is nothing really but one vast cemetery."

Before the war, Gurtler had been a theology student at Breslau. Four days after writing this vivid letter, however, he was killed. Gurtler's despair and subsequent death was replicated hundreds of thousands of times over in the bloody fields of Flanders during a gruelling, prolonged battle that would come to be known by just one Belgian village: Passchendaele.

Otherwise known as the 'Third Battle of Ypres', Passchendaele has come to symbolise the futility of warfare on the Western Front during WWI. There had been disasters before, with the battles of the Somme and Verdun being the most obvious examples, but Passchendaele only reinforced the horrendous nature that the war had developed. From an Allied perspective, the idealism of 1914 had long since disappeared along with hundreds of thousands of soldiers on both sides. All that was left was bloodshed, a grim determination to succeed and, above all, mud.

A well-intentioned plan

The battle was projected from the Flanders town of Ypres, which had already been the epicentre of two previous battles, in 1914 and 1915. The bulge in the British lines around Ypres spread the battlefield across miles of the Belgian countryside and the Allied offensive, planned by the British Field Marshal Sir Douglas Haig, in 1917, was intended to be yet another decisive breakthrough that would bring the war to a swift conclusion.

Haig had long wanted a British offensive in Flanders to break the deadlock on the Western Front and in the summer of 1917 the need for

a swift victory was urgent. Russia had been engulfed by revolution since February and the possibility of its withdrawal from the war meant that dozens of German Army divisions could be redeployed from the Eastern Front to the west. Additionally, unrestricted U-boat submarine warfare was severely disrupting Allied shipping lanes and, while the United States had declared war on Germany on 2 April, American troops had not yet arrived on the Western Front in sufficient numbers to make a decisive difference.

It was therefore left to the weary soldiers of Britain, the Commonwealth, France and Belgium to continue the fight for the time being. Haig obtained permission from a sceptical David Lloyd George, British prime minister, to launch his offensive in the Ypres Salient in the hope that it might lead to the seizure of the U-boat bases at Blankenberge and Ostend. A smaller, but successful, British attack using huge mines at Messines Ridge in June had encouraged Haig to believe that the German Army was at breaking point, but events would prove otherwise.

Bombardments and mud

In many ways, the British-led offensive was hindered by geography. The plain on the Ypres

Australian soldiers of the 10th Field Artillery Brigade walk along duckboards through the remains of Chateau Wood, near Hooge in the Ypres Salient, on 29 October 1917. This iconic image was captured by Frank Hurley, the official photographer for the Australian Imperial Force (AIF). Hurley had only recently returned from the Antarctic, where he had been a prominent member of Sir Ernest Shackleton's famous Imperial Trans-Antarctic 'Endurance' Expedition

**"THEY HAVE NO WAY OF ESCAPE,
NOTHING IS LEFT TO THEM BUT GHASTLY
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THE BATTLEFIELD IS NOTHING REALLY BUT
ONE VAST CEMETERY"**



Salient is extremely flat, which made stealthy preparations impossible. Instead, a preliminary artillery bombardment was launched that lasted for 15 days and delivered four million shells fired from 3,000 guns. Despite the intense noise and explosions, the bombardment only alerted the Germans that an attack was imminent. As a result, they heavily fortified their positions – just as they had done at the Somme the previous year.

The Allied infantry attack began on 31 July and was led by the British Fifth Army, commanded by General Sir Hubert Gough, and flanked by supporting British and French formations. The term 'British' did not just refer to soldiers from the United Kingdom, but also its empire, with Imperial troops including large numbers from Canada, Australia, India, New Zealand, South Africa and Newfoundland.

Nevertheless, this global force was stumbling into chaos. The bombardment had failed to destroy the German positions and the constant shelling had churned the clay soil and smashed the drainage systems. Although the left flank of the Allied attack achieved its objectives, the right flank completely failed, largely due to the Germans' in-depth defences. Commanded by Erich Ludendorff and Crown Prince Rupprecht of Bavaria, the German defences did not just include heavily fortified positions, but also a deceptive, lightly held front line that was backed by powerful counterattack divisions.

The determined German defenders were also supported by the worst rainfall in Flanders for 30 years. The soil turned into a quagmire with the thick mud initially clogging up rifles and immobilising tanks, but it eventually became so deep that it was just as deadly an enemy to the



Soldiers from the 45th Battalion, Australian 4th Division, wearing Small Box Respirator (SBR) gas masks at Garter Point near Zonnebeke, Ypres sector, on 27 September 1917

“DESPITE THE INTENSE NOISE AND EXPLOSIONS, THE BOMBARDMENT ONLY ALERTED THE GERMANS THAT AN ATTACK WAS IMMINENT”

Soldiers oversee the transfer of ammunition from a broad gauge train



A ballast train of the Australian 17th Light Railway Operating Company, near Ypres, October 1917.

British soldiers laying a light railway line near Boesinghe, Belgium, three days before the Third Battle of Ypres began



TRENCH RAILWAYS

THE SOLDIERS AT YPRES WERE ABLY SERVED BY A SOPHISTICATED SYSTEM OF FRONTLINE LIGHT RAILWAYS THAT PROVIDED CONTINUOUS SUPPLIES AND SAVED LIVES

Railways were the principal means of long-distance transportation on land during WWI and it was no coincidence that the Western Front stabilised between two trunk railways: the German-controlled line from Flanders to the Ardennes and the Allied lines from the Channel ports via Amiens, Paris and Lorraine. Huge armies could consequently be supplied all year round, but railways were also crucial to offensive preparations on the front line.

Between 1915-17, both sides used the static conditions to build light narrow-gauge railways to convey ammunition and building materials beyond the standard-gauge lines up to the front. These light railways were more effective for transporting supplies than motor lorries (that broke up ground with their tyres) or mules and men (because of their low carrying capacity). The Germans laid 'Feldbahns' (field railways) when advancing through enemy territory, while the Allies made effective use of the established French Decauville light railways and the British (and Commonwealth) War Department Light Railways (WDLR).

At Passchendaele, the WDLR proved its value, particularly in the muddy conditions that hindered other means of transportation. Vast quantities of ammunition and batteries of field guns were hauled to their required destinations but the railways could also save lives. The wounded could be taken by train to hospitals miles behind the front line and the WDLR had control posts along the tracks, which acted as dressing stations for the walking wounded.

In one notable instance, at Passchendaele in October 1917, the 5th New Zealand Light Railway Company evacuated more than 3,000 wounded soldiers in a single night. The railwaymen later received letters of appreciation stating that "the lives of a great number of men had been saved by the light railway".



A FALTERING OFFENSIVE

THE THIRD BATTLE OF YPRES WAS A PAINFULLY SLOW ALLIED ADVANCE THROUGH THE FLANDERS COUNTRYSIDE THAT COST MANY LIVES AND ACHIEVED FEW RESULTS

The huge Allied offensive was centred around the already bloodied historic Flanders town of Ypres. Nicknamed "Wipers" by British and Commonwealth troops, the Allied front line was positioned to the north of Ypres with a 'bulge' heading towards the German lines to the northeast. Field Marshal Sir Douglas Haig's plan was to break through the bulge and into the open countryside beyond the village of Passchendaele, which was approximately eight kilometres away.

However, as can be seen on the map, the breakthrough did not occur during the battle and Allied lines took months to move forward to Passchendaele. Within this relatively small area, almost half a million men became casualties and small objectives became large battles such as Pilckem Ridge, Broodseinde, Langemarck and Poelcappelle.

XX
XX ALLIED UNITS
XX
XX GERMAN UNITS

Allies as the Germans were. Edwin Vaughan of the 8th Warwickshire Regiment described how, "Men with serious wounds... crawled for safety into new shell holes, and now the water was rising about them and, powerless to move, they were slowly drowning." Indeed, the mud of 1917 would claim the lives of countless men and horses during the Third Battle of Ypres.

Limited successes

After small, initial gains, the Allies found themselves literally bogged down in the low-lying terrain that had now been rendered virtually impassable by the bombardment and heavy rain. The attack resumed on 16 August, but with little effect and the stalemate continued for another month until an improvement in the weather came in September. By now, Gough had been replaced in direct command by General Sir Herbert Plumer. Under his leadership, the Allies achieved some limited successes using "bite and hold" tactics, with the infantry making small-scale advances and never outrunning their artillery support.

Consequently, there were Allied victories at the battles of Menin Road Ridge (20-26 September), Polygon Wood (26-27 September) and Broodseinde (4 October). These successes enabled the Allies to establish possession of the ridge east of Ypres, but further attacks failed to make much progress. This was largely thanks to Haig insisting on continuing the offensive against Passchendaele Ridge instead of halting, declaring a victory and taking stock of the situation. Haig told one of his subordinates, "The enemy is faltering... a good decisive blow might lead to decisive results."

It was not to be and Haig's stubborn optimism was not shared by the largely Anzac and Canadian troops who carried out the final stages of the offensive. These men floundered in endless mud as the weather worsened yet again, while fresh German reserves arrived, well supplied with mustard gas. Eventually, on 6 November 1917, the little village of

The conditions at Passchendaele elevated the horrendous nature of WWI to an even more apocalyptic level

THE PILLBOX: SCOURGE OF THE ALLIED OFFENSIVE

HUNDREDS OF THESE SQUAT CONCRETE FORTS SIGNIFICANTLY
ADDED TO THE MODERN NIGHTMARE OF PASSCHENDAELE



A German pillbox at Bullecourt, France, 1917. Many of the pillboxes at Passchendaele would have been of a similar construction



A German pillbox steel frame discovered at Broodseinde, in October 1917. This would have supported a relatively small fortification



German soldiers shot while trying to escape from a pillbox near Zonnebeke. Such was the pillbox's destructive power on Allied infantry that garrisons were often shown little mercy

A key feature of the battlefield on the Ypres Salient in 1917 was the German pillbox. Constructed of concrete, reinforced with steel and with roofs and walls that were several feet thick, these miniature field fortifications wreaked havoc upon advancing Allied soldiers.

With the increasing firepower of British artillery, the Germans had begun building concrete fortifications during late 1916-early 1917, which enabled front line troops to survive massive bombardments and then fight from them. The Germans gave these fortifications the functional name of 'Mannschafts Eisenbeton Unterstände' (Reinforced Concrete Shelters for Troops), but British and Commonwealth soldiers soon nicknamed them 'pillboxes'.

The pillbox's primary role was to shelter troops from bombardments and many were deliberately covered in debris on the roofs and against the walls to break up the structure's silhouette. They varied in size and could house as little as six men, but they could also be the size of car garages and there were even two-storey pillboxes that could shelter up to 40 soldiers. Additionally, a cunning design feature meant that rear-facing walls were thinner and weaker. If German troops had to retreat from a pillbox, the Allies would subsequently find that the walls facing the enemy offered little protection.

Although many lacked firing platforms, pillboxes were formidable in combat. In the area around Passchendaele the Germans scattered hundreds of pillboxes in three main lines of defence over several kilometres. Their positions provided mutually supporting crossfire that were also backed up by concreted machine gun posts on open ground and counterattack troops and artillery in the rear.

Such was the pillboxes' importance that they became crucial Allied objectives, but they were extremely difficult to overcome. Attacking troop formations were quickly broken up and soldiers then became vulnerable to machine gun fire.

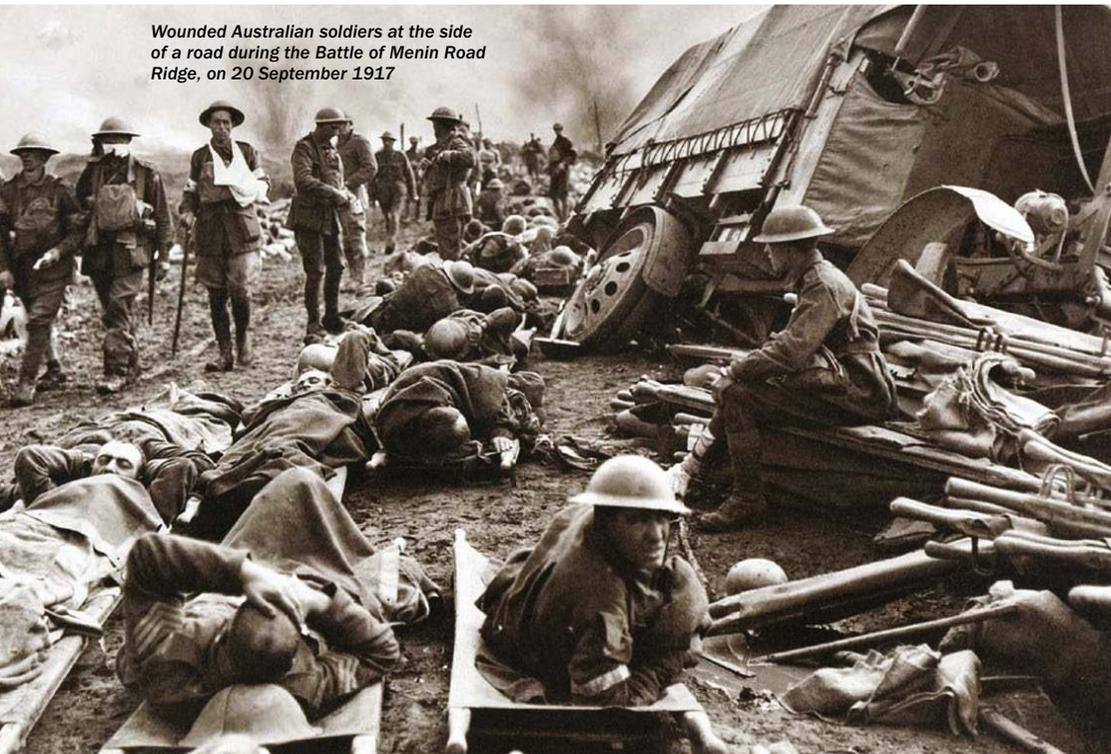
Nevertheless, the ground had to be taken and only infantry could achieve it. Small groups would advance under creeping barrage fire and enter a pillbox from the rear using grenades and even bayonets. Pillbox garrisons often surrendered at this stage, but many Germans were killed in cold blood by enraged Allied troops.

To capture and neutralise a pillbox required great courage and tenacity from Allied troops and many decorations were subsequently awarded, including five Victoria Crosses to Australian soldiers during the Third Battle of Ypres. The Allied infantrymen eventually prevailed over the pillbox, but with a tremendous loss of life.

Canadian soldiers and German prisoners crossing the muddy battlefield in the area around Passchendaele



Wounded Australian soldiers at the side of a road during the Battle of Menin Road Ridge, on 20 September 1917



“WITHIN THOSE FIVE MILES, THERE HAD BEEN AT LEAST 275,000 ALLIED AND 260,000 GERMAN CASUALTIES OVER THREE MONTHS”

Passchendaele was captured by British and Canadian troops and Haig used its capture to call off the offensive and claim a ‘success’ by 10 November.

A muddy sea of futility

Nevertheless, the capture of Passchendaele was the smallest achievement imaginable because the village lay only five miles beyond the starting point of the offensive. Within those five miles, there had been at least 275,000 Allied and 260,000 German casualties over the course of three months, a combined total of almost half a million men. Haig’s grand plan to break through and snuff out the U-boat menace had resulted in little more than making the Allied bulge in the Ypres Salient slightly larger. Worse was to come the following year when the German spring offensive of 1918 forced the Allies to give up much of their hard-fought ground as indefensible. That arguably rendered the effort and horror of 1917 as pointless. Thus Passchendaele was condemned by many as a vivid symbol of the perceived futility of the fighting on the Western Front and even the war itself.

Despite his successes in helping to achieve the later Allied victory in 1918, Haig’s leadership at Passchendaele, along with the Somme, sealed his reputation as a controversial commander. The human cost at the Third Battle of Ypres has remained notorious for a century, particularly Haig’s decision to continue the offensive into November 1917, and the debate over the battle’s importance (or worthlessness) among historians will probably never be resolved.

For those who actually fought there, however, the Battle of Passchendaele was a nightmare that had no positive outcome, as Second Lieutenant J W Naylor of the Royal Artillery later explained, “I came to hate that salient. Absolutely loathed it. You could practically segregate the salient from the whole rest of the war zone. It wore you down. The weather, the lack of rations, everything seemed to be against you. There didn’t seem to be anything left. You were wet through for days on end. We never thought we’d get out alive. You couldn’t see the cloud with the silver lining. There wasn’t one.”



‘THE LAST FIGHTING TOMMY’

THIS ORDINARY ENGLISHMAN ESCAPED THE CARNAGE OF PASSCHENDAELE TO BECOME THE LAST SURVIVING COMBAT SOLDIER OF WWI

Born on 17 June 1898, in Somerset, Harry Patch was an ordinary man who, like millions of other British men during WWI, was conscripted and fought in the trenches of the Western Front. Unlike many, however, Patch lived into extreme old age and was able to tell the story of his war well into the 21st Century.

Patch had been an apprentice plumber in Bath before he was conscripted into the British Army in October 1916 and completed his training as a private. He arrived in France in June 1917 and was soon in the Ypres Salient, serving as a Lewis machine gunner with C Company of the 7th Battalion in the Duke of Cornwall’s Light Infantry. He took part in the August fighting around Langemarck and recalled ‘going over the top’ for the first time, “I can still see the bewilderment and fear on men’s faces as we went over the top. We crawled because if you stood up you’d be killed. All over the battlefield the wounded were lying there, English and German, all crying for help.”

Throughout his time on the front, Patch took care not to kill advancing Germans and would wound them in the legs instead with his machine gun. Patch’s luck ran out, however, on 22 September 1917, when a shell exploded above his Lewis gun team while they were returning from the front line. Three of his close friends were killed and Patch received a serious wound in the groin that meant he was invalided home to England. He never saw action again.

Remarkably, Patch did not speak about his war experiences until he was 100 years old, but he subsequently became an increasingly visible presence who participated in media interviews and commemorations. He travelled to Flanders in 2007 to commemorate the 90th anniversary of the Battle of Passchendaele and laid a wreath at the Cenotaph in London on 11 November 2008 to mark the 90th anniversary of the Armistice. By the time Patch died, aged 111, on 25 July 2009 he was the oldest man in Europe and the last surviving combat soldier of WWI from any country.



BLOODSHED, POLITICS & REMEMBRANCE

PROFESSOR MARK CONNELLY OF THE UNIVERSITY OF KENT EXPLAINS THE COMPLEX REASONS BEHIND THE TRAGEDY OF PASSCHENDAELE AND HOW THE REMEMBRANCE OF WWI HAS CHANGED



Although the area around Ypres and Passchendaele was Haig's first choice for an offensive location even before the Battle of the Somme, why did the battle still not go according to plan?

First of all, we have to realise that Flanders has always been important to the British. I often say to students that if they want to understand the British obsession with Belgium, they should think of it as the most southeastern English county. If a power that is opposed to Great Britain sits at the confluence of the North Sea and the English Channel, then Britain is in big trouble. Fighting in Belgium in 1914 is as important as it will be in 1940 – it is the area of most overseas interest to Britain and its national safety.

For Haig that's a great attraction, and by 1917 there's another issue emerging, which is the intelligence about where German submarines are operating from Belgian ports. If there is a major operation in Flanders, it will put pressure on the Germans to perhaps evacuate the coast. You therefore also slash the efficiency of the U-boats by making them operate from bases in Germany.

There is that strategic element there, so why doesn't the offensive achieve what it wants? From the start there are confusions as to what the battle is there to do. Far from being a "donkey", Haig has given a lot of thought about his military career and what the British Army should be doing in this war and the best way it can be used. However, he has notorious verbal and conversation skills and was known as someone who wasn't very

easy to follow. That creates confusion with his commander on the spot, Hubert Gough, because it becomes a Fifth Army operation. Gough spends the whole time feeling unsure whether he's meant to be fighting a battle like Messines with limited objectives, or whether it's about dashing and breaking through on as broad a front as possible and sweeping upwards towards the sea.

That confusion runs through the planning both at GHQ and Fifth Army headquarters and almost fatally undermines things from the start. They could possibly have got away with that if the weather hadn't changed. Nobody could have predicted that weather.

There has been a lot of nonsense written about the wetness of Flemish summers and of course the weather in northwest Europe is changeable. Everybody knew that, but it was the wettest summer in a century and that is what destroys operations and makes a mockery of everything.

What factors made Passchendaele a particularly horrendous battle?

I know some historians would certainly disagree with me on this and that's the glory of history in that it's a continual discussion.

To me, Third Ypres needed re-evaluating, by both the government in London and the generals, for them to clarify what they were aiming for. The longer they kept the idea of a great breakthrough, the more detrimental that was to how they conceived and ran operations.

In the end, the battle creates its own demonic logic. As the British inch forward and find themselves in a new dodgy position, you then have to fight on to find another new position. When they finally

get up the Passchendaele ridge and look back to Ypres, they can see virtually every British gun position. The Germans can therefore see everything, including what is moving in the landscape and every gun flash. In one sense that justifies a British attack to command that ground.

The other way of seeing it is that given the difficulties created by the weather, the problems that are then created for logistics and aerial spotting all mean that the British artillery cannot live up to its full

potential and are on a losing wicket. It strikes me that at some point earlier in the operations, more grip

should have been exerted about what the point was of continuing. However, they all seem to have convinced themselves that one more big kick would make the door come off its hinges and they would be through.

I certainly find that the later stages of the Third Battle of Ypres are really quite difficult to find justifications for, because I don't even think it's efficient attrition. The sheer fact that in the spring of 1918 the whole area has to be given up as indefensible and the Allies are pretty much back to their start line shows something about the emptiness of the operations.

Were a lot of men being killed just to prevent a loss of face?

I think there is an element of that. They're convincing themselves that the Germans are on their last knockings and must collapse. Despite all the controversies about the extent to which Haig is being fed intelligence that he wants to hear, I think that view has been moderated over the past few years.

There's clearly some hard evidence to show that the Germans are not having a good time at Ypres, it isn't an easy battle for them to fight. They are definitely suffering, but too much emphasis is put onto that, leading to a much more optimistic view of the overall effect that they're having.

There is that element of the battle becoming a demonic self-fulfilling prophecy because the British Army is voluntarily putting its head on a chopping block and forcing its neck out further and further to take ridges, plateaus and high ground. In the end it's such a narrow cone of land that everyone agrees that it's indefensible.

Could it be argued that Passchendaele was in some ways a repeat of the Somme in 1916?

That's a very interesting question. I think there is an element of repetition in the sense that perhaps there is still that lack of clarity among the higher brains of the army as to what the battle is meant to achieve. Is it breakthrough or attrition? There is a comparison there with the Somme.

Where I think the battles are different are in things such as ammunition supplies. The logistics train works pretty well throughout the battle so that is something that has been straightened out by 1917. The quality of the shells they're firing is very good too. You don't have the intensity of the supply problem that you had in 1916.

However, there is a sense where you can't make the military the entire scapegoats for what happened at Passchendaele. Fingers of blame should be pointed at the military and politicians. What are the government and War Cabinet doing in London? If they have qualms, why are they not exerting them more fully? Why aren't they asking questions and calling Haig to account? I think there is a lot of self-serving that is evident in the memoirs written after the war by people like Lloyd George. It suits him to say, "I couldn't rein in Douglas Haig," but he is the prime minister and he could have at least asked him a few tricky questions if he'd really wanted to.

Below: British Prime Minister David Lloyd George c.1918. Lloyd George was swift to condemn military commanders over Passchendaele but he did not openly acknowledge his own political responsibility during the battle



Left: A portrait of Field Marshal Sir Douglas Haig at General Headquarters (GHQ), France by Sir William Orpen. This portrait was painted in May 1917, two months before the Third Battle of Ypres began

The Tyne Cot Commonwealth War Graves Cemetery and Memorial to the Missing is located near Passchendaele. It is the largest Commonwealth forces cemetery in the world and contains 11,965 burials including 8,369 that are unnamed



VISIT FLANDERS
 Visitflanders is the Belgian tourism board for Flanders and Brussels. Flanders has many museums, events and exhibitions that shed light on the various aspects of WWI. To mark the centenary of the battles of Messines and Passchendaele, visitflanders is hosting a programme of events across Flanders throughout 2017, including exhibitions, commemorative services, concerts, information points, soundscape and light installations, projects and themed weekends.
 For more information about the 2017 programme or events, and how you can get involved, go to: www.visitflanders.com

“IT’S VERY EASY TO TAKE WWI OUT OF CONTEXT AND VIEW IT AS SOME MEANINGLESS TRAGEDY THAT CAME FROM NOWHERE”

We could arguably say that this is always a problem of a democracy at war. When you have civilian politicians trying to create an interface with soldiers, they have very different mindsets and that means there’s always going to be room for friction, tension and mistakes, too. However, as we know from two world wars, the democracies tend to do it a bit better.

David Lloyd George later wrote, “Passchendaele was indeed one of the great disasters of the war. No soldier of any intelligence now defends this senseless campaign.” What is your assessment of that statement?

It’s interesting because of the sheer semantics there. Why doesn’t he say, “No politician or soldier.” He has put in a very artificial divide as though it’s purely a military matter and nothing to do with him. I think Lloyd George was perfectly right to question the battle but where he was disingenuous was not saying, “I was part of it, I was in that mess as well.” If you want some Flanders mud to stick, some of it must stick on Lloyd George too.

When Lloyd George gets into his stride with his war memoirs in the 1930s, the glorious thing for him is that Haig has died and he’s the last man standing among the big British players of the Great War. He thinks he’s going to have the last word, but obviously controversy will continue because the British official history on Third Ypres doesn’t appear until after WWII.

Harry Patch fought at Passchendaele and when he died in 2009 he was the last surviving combat soldier from WWI (see ‘The Last Fighting Tommy’, p33). With the passing of the WWI generation, how have attitudes changed to the way we view this conflict?

You could say that once everyone is dead it makes for more of a “free for all”. No one can answer back anymore and we are free to write our preoccupations onto them. We can live out our prejudices and interests and manipulate the scene much more easily. It strikes me that someone like Harry Patch became almost unwittingly puppet-like. So many people had preconceptions that they read something Harry had said and drew out a little bit from it to stick against what they were convinced the Great War was about, rather than thinking through the broader contexts of it.

It’s very easy to take WWI out of context and view it as some meaningless tragedy that came from nowhere and ultimately meant nothing – that it was futile in every sense. However, what’s really interesting about our complex contemporary remembrance culture is that people will visit the Menin Gate and be deeply moved by “The Last Post” ceremony. They will say things about the tragedy and futility of WWI and how hearing “The Last Post” really brings it home to them. I ask them to think about why the ceremony was originally inaugurated. It’s because Belgian people no more wanted to be part of the German Empire in 1914 than they did in 1940, so why is one war “clean” and another one “dirty”?

It might be part of a British peculiarity because we weren’t invaded and unlike in 1940 there never seemed to be an obvious moment of invasion of Britain. So WWI is suddenly “meaningless” and “futile” even though there were tens of thousands of Belgians who were dragged off to work in Germany during WWI and it wasn’t a nice occupation. There is also turmoil in the east. I’m not saying that the Tsarist Empire was any nicer, but I think that we too often detach WWI from any sense of

moral value and forget there were people who were invaded and didn’t want to be invaded in 1914. They were quite pleased that somebody showed up to kick the invader out.

What we also tend to misunderstand is that by 1918 everyone is aware that this has been an incredibly bloody war and that cannot be denied. Newspaper columns can’t disguise, beneath the veneer of glory, that battles are hideous and men are enduring awful conditions. The thing that we’ve lost is that by 1918-19 and the remembrance culture of the 1930s these men become more heroic. The message is, “They endured hell to keep you safe.” Everybody knows they went through hell but there’s a good moral judgement that goes with it and we’ve completely forgotten that.

We’re very familiar with the misery and the slaughter but we’ve forgotten the interpretation that people had in the 1920s and 30s. We’re looking at it through the prism of Nazism, which throws everything out of kilter.

What is the lesson in 2017 that people can learn from the battles of 1917 and how should it be remembered?

Remembrance is always a loaded thing: what are we remembering and why? We probably can commemorate things that actually seem contradictory. We can respectfully commemorate the fact that thousands of men from across what was the British Empire fulfilled their duty and what they signed up to do. What they endured is worthy of all respect.

You might say that is the “patriotic” spin on it but I think that we can also simultaneously remember the suffering that *all* soldiers went through. We can think that whatever problems nation states face, politicians will hopefully always be motivated to find solutions other than war to deal with them. That’s not to go down the route to pacifism but we are most respectful about our armed forces when we consider very carefully the ways they should be used.

A FAMILY TRAGEDY IN FLANDERS

REBECCA LISLE REVEALS HOW HER FAMILY WAS TORN APART WHEN A FATHER AND SON WERE KILLED ON THE SAME DAY IN OCTOBER 1917



The loss of life during the Third Battle of Ypres was appalling, with hundreds of thousands of Allied and German casualties. The collective grief that was created from this staggering death toll was enormous, with countless families affected.

One of the most tragic cases was the story of Harry and Ronald Moorhouse. Harry and his son Ronald came from a prosperous Yorkshire family and both were members of the 1/4th Battalion of the King's Own Yorkshire Light Infantry (KOYLI). The Moorhouses' battalion was a territorial unit within the British regiment and by 1917 Harry was the acting lieutenant colonel while Ronald was a captain.

On 9 October 1917, father and son were killed on the same day in tragic circumstances while their battalion was attempting to take objectives in front of a farm on the road between Gravenstafel and Mosselmarkt. Harry was aged 48 and Ronald just 22. Their bodies were never recovered and they are commemorated by name on the Tyne Cot Memorial near Passchendaele. It is believed that the Moorhouses were the only known case of a father and son dying together during the battle.

Harry and Ronald were both decorated soldiers and the deaths of these highly respected and popular officers were devastating to the men under their command and most of all their family. Rebecca Lisle is Harry's great-granddaughter and Ronald's great-niece and grew up surrounded by tales and mementoes from their lives. Now a successful children's author, Lisle reveals the sad but proud story of her ancestors lives and legacy.

What were Harry and Ronald's military backgrounds before the war?

Before the war Harry had been in the Territorial Army. He had joined the Wakefield Volunteers in 1891 and went on to win a medal in the Second Boer War. He was also a trustee for the battalion – he was very interested in the TA and I think he felt that it was very important that men joined it and were ready to fight.

I don't know about Ronald, but he must have been in the Territorials as well. As soon as war broke out, Ronald – who had been farming in Canada – came straight back to join up.

Harry's real job was working in the family mill – they had a small woollen mill at Flanshaw, near Wakefield, and it belonged to Harry's father. I get the impression that he wasn't particularly interested in it. He and his wife had partnership of a racehorse and at one time they owned a brewery and I don't think he particularly loved the woollen industry.

"KISS THEM FOR ME, TELL THEM DADDY LOVES THEM"

His elder brother Joe was the manager of the company and he was the one that said what was going to happen and how it would happen. I think Harry probably enjoyed the life of a soldier more to a certain extent, but not to the extent of wanting to become a regular soldier.

What were the circumstances that led to both Harry and Ronald being both posted to the same battalion in the KOYLI?

They'd always been in the same battalion, the 1/4th, and in June 1917 Ronald was posted out to the 2/4th because they were short of officers. In his letters Ronald writes, "I'm longing to get back to the 1/4th. It's nice here but I'm looking forward to coming back." Harry obviously wanted him back and in lots of his letters he says to his wife, "I'm looking after Ronald, don't you worry," and that Ronald was doing fine, that he'd seen him and he was okay. By September 1917 he is back in the 1/4th, so they're back together again.

I noticed from somebody's account about the KOYLI that the 2/4th were actually not that involved much with Passchendaele at that time. One can't help but think that if Ronald hadn't gone back into the 1/4th he would have been safe in the 2/4th and not been killed.

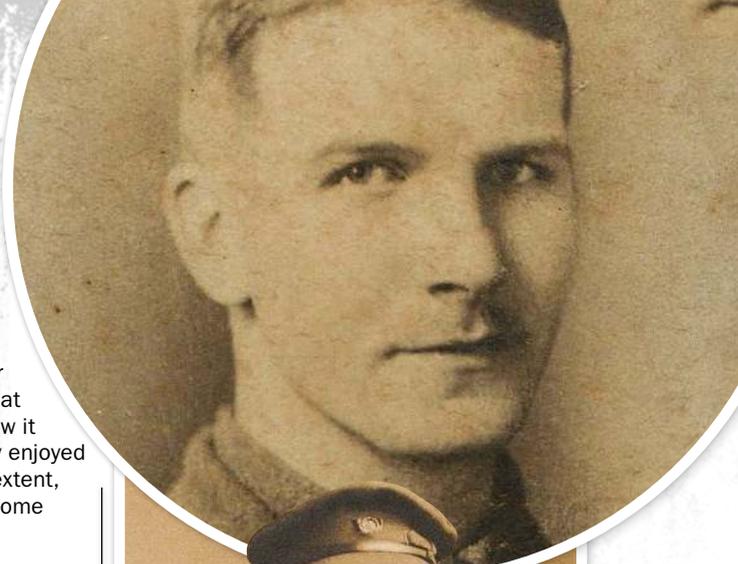
How often would the family hear from them?

In one of his letters Harry says to his wife, "It's my duty and my wish to write to you every day." I think from that he wrote every day but I don't think Ronald was as good. In some of his letters he says, "I'm sorry, but we have been quite busy at the front. I'm sorry you haven't heard from me, don't worry I'm fine." So I think he wrote less frequently, but I think Harry was writing when he could every day.

In every single one of Harry's letters he says, "God will protect me, God will look after us." They were very devout Congregationalists and as a believer that kept him going and his family were everything.

Even during the Boer War, Harry was writing letters home to his family and children and it was all very loving. He wasn't this stiff-upper-lip Edwardian father and he would write, "Kiss them for me, tell them Daddy loves them." He also used to decorate the envelope for his daughter Marjorie with little pictures and bring them presents. At one time he sent home a leopard skin that somebody had shot in South Africa and he must have sent it in the post! We had that leopard skin up until about 1975.

The letters that begin in 1915 are quite long, descriptive and quite chatty. There is a lot of talk about coming home but of course later on the letters get shorter and less detailed. They're quite brief but they're full of, "I love you, I can't wait to be with you" and "Tell me about the garden, tell me about the flowers." I really get the feeling that they didn't want to talk about the war; they wanted to think about



Above, top: Captain Ronald Moorhouse had been awarded the Military Cross for gallantry in 1916 while commanding a raiding party that met its objectives under heavy fire

Above: In his obituary, Lieutenant Colonel Harry Moorhouse was described as, "One of the truest and best friends that ever lived. If the Battalion was in a tight place, there for a certainty he was with them – always cheery, always optimistic, but never casual."



home as a sort of haven that they could go back to that would be unchanging.

The letters are actually quite dull in some ways. They don't talk about the horrors and I don't think they wanted the family to know, especially the womenfolk. They just did not want them to know how awful it was and that way they could keep it pure at home and the way it always had been.

What were the circumstances that led to their deaths on 9 October 1917?

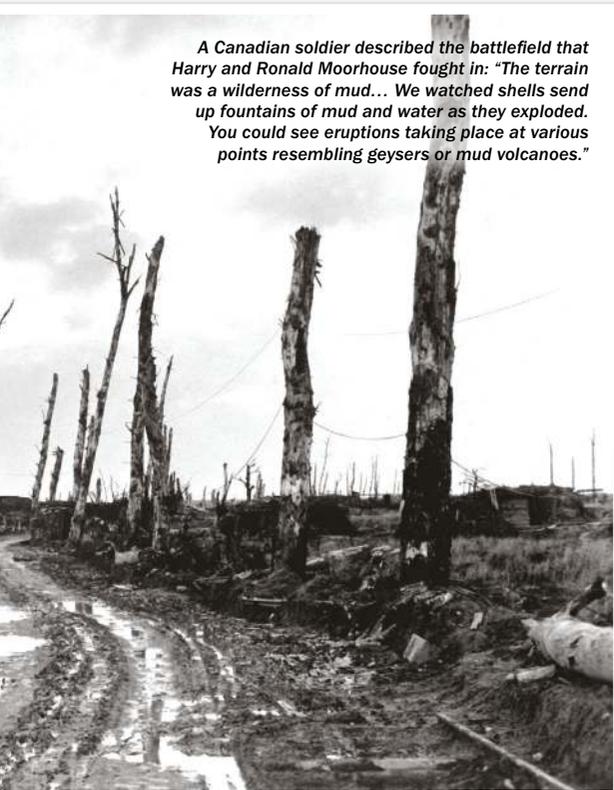
It was incredibly muddy and they'd had torrential rain that had been going on for days. There were quite a few companies and Ronald was leading one while Harry was leading the battalion. Harry managed to do what he was asked to do and then two companies, including Ronald's, lost a lot of their men going up a hill in muddy water. The artillery didn't work because it had all got bogged down so they hadn't got the backup. Ronald was hit but he went on leading his men up this hill before he was fatally wounded and died.

By then Harry had got back to base camp and when he returned he heard that Ronald had been injured. He immediately said, "I must go and find him and bring him back if he's been wounded." They urged him not to go and he said, "No I must go, he's my son," so he went out with another officer. As they were crossing the land they came under fire and Harry was hit by a sniper. The other officer managed to get him into a dugout or crater and hoped that he would be able to get a doctor to him but Harry died. There was too much gallantry, bravery and dedication really.

What impact did their deaths have on their family?

Who can really say? I know that Harry's wife, my great-grandmother, never got over it really. She

A Canadian soldier described the battlefield that Harry and Ronald Moorhouse fought in: "The terrain was a wilderness of mud... We watched shells send up fountains of mud and water as they exploded. You could see eruptions taking place at various points resembling geysers or mud volcanoes."



"THEY DIDN'T WANT TO TALK ABOUT THE WAR; THEY WANTED TO THINK ABOUT HOME AS A SORT OF HAVEN"

took to her room for ten days with the curtains drawn and didn't see anybody and then I suppose she had to rally. I believe she went to the memorial service for them and other officers, NCOs and men who had been killed that occurred on 21 October 1917 at Wakefield Cathedral. However, it was mainly for Harry and Ronald – their names were on the cover – so she must have got up to go to that. Apparently at the memorial service thousands lined the procession route from the town hall to the cathedral and it was filled to capacity so it was a really big thing.

What was the effect on the family? Did Harry's wife Susanna realise that he had moved Ronald back to be with him in the battalion?

Originally she must have thought, "That's good, Harry can look after him," but of course, in the end, it was the worst thing possible.

The knock-on effect was that the war ended the following year and the mill was not doing terribly well. By about 1920-22, everything was sold. They sold the whole mill and the business because it had a massive overdraft and was in the red. The family moved out of the big house in Flanshaw and Alan, who was Ronald and Marjorie's brother, went to live with his mother in a little house in Harrogate. Alan said, "I will never leave her. I will always stay with her, she's had too many losses and she can't lose me as well."

By then my grandmother had got married, in about 1922-23, to somebody who she didn't much love or respect. They had much less money and status, while the sold family house had had numerous outbuildings, acres of land and carriages and horses. So it was a bit of downward slide really.

How were Harry and Ronald remembered within the family when you were growing up?

They were mentioned a lot and I used to go and spend every summer with my grandmother Marjorie. On the walls there were always lovely, big photographs of them on display. One of my cousins has a full-sized six-foot hand-printed photograph of Harry standing in his uniform, which obviously would dominate any room. There were lovely photographs of Harry in uniform with that slight smile and twinkly blue eyes and one or two of Ronald.

I remember I used to love looking in my grandmother's drawers that were full of little bits and pieces. She had still kept all the insignia from their uniforms and had cut off the French horn insignia that was the symbol of the KOYLI. So there were those things and in the cupboard in the hall where she kept the vacuum cleaner there was Harry's dress uniform. For a long time it was just standing there on a stand. She always just talked about how wonderful

they were but she would never talk about what it was like about the time when she found out they had been killed.

One of the envelopes I've got is empty, but it's a letter back from Susanna to Harry and it says, "Return, Killed in Action." That's her last letter to him that he never received, but I don't have anything that she wrote.

Although it is almost 100 years since Harry and Ronald's deaths, are their losses still felt in the family?

I have three boys who are 24, 27 and 30, who are little bit older, but they would have all gone to war back then. They are very interested and fascinated to think of a 22-year-old (Ronald was actually 20 when he went out) leading men and dying for his country and having that sense of duty. I don't think young men feel the same nowadays, they just wouldn't want to do it.

But they are very interested because I'm the sort of archivist for the family so I have the letters and most of the photos. I've made a book for the family with all the pictures in so they can see it and not forget.

As a children's author, have you ever thought of writing about Harry and Ronald's story?

I have thought about it and I began to do it. That was the reason I gathered together all the letters, transcribed them, put them in chronological order and tried to make sense of them. I thought, "I must not let their story go unnoticed." I thought that people should know about it because they'd given so much and it had been so hard for the family.

But I can't do it. It's better this way with people like the War Graves Commission, The Sunday Times and [magazines] doing something. That is better I think – let us say that my books are more light-hearted.

I certainly have thought about it because I would like to do one about the animals in WWI such as the dogs. However, with my family's story it's just too difficult and when I got my material I realised that I would have to have used the real-life stuff for fiction and I didn't want to do that.

Right: Harry Moorhouse (far left), his wife Susanna, their sons Ronald and Alan (in army uniforms) and a friend from the Royal Navy, photographed at their home, Springfield House, at Flanshaw, Yorkshire



REMEMBERING SACRIFICE

WORDS PETER JOHNSTON

THE NATIONAL ARMY MUSEUM'S CURATOR PETER JOHNSTON DISCUSSES SOME OF THE INCREDIBLE OBJECTS AND ARTWORKS RELATED TO PASSCHENDAELE, CURRENTLY ON DISPLAY



“LITTLE MORE THAN DUCKBOARD WALKWAYS THROUGH FEATURELESS, MUDDY LANDSCAPES, SUCH ‘ROADS’ WERE OFTEN THE ONLY WAY TO PASS”

WARRINGTON ROAD, 1917 BY RICHARD TENNANT COOPER

Richard Tennant Cooper painted this scene after the end of the First World War, but it was based on his own memories of the conflict. He had trained as an artist in Paris, but in 1914 he volunteered as a private in 16th (Service) Battalion (Public Schools), The Duke of Cambridge's Own (Middlesex Regiment). In 1916 he was given a temporary commission as a second lieutenant in

the Royal Engineers, and he served with them at Passchendaele in 1917. He survived the war.

'Warrington Road' was a track in the Ypres Salient, running from Shrapnel Corner on the Lille Road out of Ypres, past Zillebeke Lake, to the mid-point on the road between Hell-fire Corner and Zillebeke village. Like 'Regent Street', and 'Rotten Row' in Plugstreet (Ploegsteert) Wood, it demonstrates the troops' habit

of giving nicknames to well-travelled routes. Little more than duckboard walkways through featureless, muddy landscapes, such 'roads' were often the only way to pass, even at the risk that snipers had lined them up in their sights. The alternative of walking across the terrain could mean getting lost or falling into a shell-hole; in fact many soldiers and draught animals did drown in waterlogged ground.

GERMAN 'SHELL-HOLE' POSITIONS
ON PASSCHENDAELE RIDGE, 1917

One of the soldiers fighting in the British Army at Passchendaele was Richard Talbot Kelly. He served with the Royal Artillery as part of an 18-pounder gun battery crew. As a Forward Observation Officer his role was to spot the fall of the shells and help direct fire onto the targets. It also meant that he had a front row seat of the battlefield and exceptional view of the logistical and tactical struggle that was unfolding before him.

After joining up, Talbot Kelly fought at the Battle of Loos in 1915, the Somme in 1916, and at the Battle of Arras earlier in 1917 before Passchendaele. He was also an artist, and his watercolours and drawings and published memoirs illustrate the war from a very different and personal perspective.

Here, Talbot Kelly has painted German shell hole positions. His notes on the image also read, "Note - coloured tassels of German troops & new type pack & German Gas mask, 1917."

GERMAN ARMY
RESPIRATOR, 1917

This German army respirator belonged to a soldier in a German Guards regiment. It was collected by Lt Col Henry Jourdain of the Connaught Rangers during the attack at Langemarck between 16 and 18 August 1917. Langemarck, was the second Allied attack of the Passchendaele campaign. During the battle, while both sides were hampered by the heavy rain, the French made substantial gains in particular and the British were able to take some ground, but German counterattacks forced them back.

Jourdain was an experienced soldier, and had served throughout the Boer War of 1899-1902. He saw action at Spion Kop, Ladysmith, Colenso and many other engagements.

Following the outbreak of the First World War, Jourdain took command of the 5th (Service) Battalion of the Connaught Rangers. They were soon sent to Gallipoli and fought there, before serving in Salonika and Palestine before they were sent to the Western Front. They fought at Messines Ridge, before fighting in the Passchendaele campaign.

THE POCKET DIARY
OF JAMES SUTHERLAND

James Sutherland went to France early in 1915 as a Private with the 6th Battalion, Seaforth Highlanders. He received a commission the same year and in 1916 joined the 23rd Battalion, Middlesex Regiment. He wrote regular letters to his families and kept a diary, held by the National Army Museum. The final entry for 30 July 1917 reads: His last diary entry reads: 'Holy Communion. Conference with CO. Get ready. All aboard for the Canal. Hope this as good as the last show. Cheerio everyone and don't worry. The Diehards are O.K.'

The following day, the first day of the battle, James Sutherland was killed in action at Pilckem Ridge leading his company. His body was never recovered, and he is commemorated on the Menin Gate.

In a letter to his father, Sutherland's Commanding Officer wrote, 'his memory is with us always, and that is a bright and splendid possession.'

29 Sun—8th after Trinity Get up at noon.
Write letters. Study maps. Get
hair in. Letter from Mother. Cigs
from Pop. Parcel from Dad. So
want to read. When shall I be
sleeping in a bed!!!

30 Mon DER TAG. Holy Communion.
Z Conference with CO. Get ready.
All aboard for the Canal. Hope
this is good as the last show.
Cheerio everyone don't worry
The Diehards are O.K.

31 Tues—Trinity Law Sittings end. Annual and Nov. to
July Game Certificates and Gun Licences expire



The Third Battle of Ypres began in the aftermath of the 1917 mutinies within the French army, but did they have any influence on the planning for Third Ypres?

WAS IT W

WORDS JONATHAN KRAUSE



It's considered one of the most tragic campaigns among the litany of disasters during WWI, but could Passchendaele in any way be considered a success?

Dr Jonathan Krause of University of Oxford's History Faculty weighs up the aftermath of the battle

It has been 100 years since the third, and largest, battle of Ypres; a battle more commonly known in the Anglophone world as 'Passchendaele'. In the canon of the First World War, and especially the cultural memory of that conflict in Britain and parts of the former British empire, Passchendaele vies with the Somme for the position of 'most infamous and emblematic battle of the First World War'. The argument over the necessity and results of the battle has been waged, off and on, for generations, and with scarcely a few metres movement in any direction by either camp. It would be difficult to dislodge the overwhelming majority who believe that the battle was a futile waste, in any case.



**“PASSCHENDAELE VIES WITH THE SOMME
FOR THE POSITION OF ‘MOST INFAMOUS AND
EMBLEMATIC BATTLE OF THE FIRST WORLD WAR’”**

ORTH IT?

The standard measurements have already been rolled out. Enemy killed and friendlies lost, territory gained measured in terms of the farthest advance (why never in square miles?), the quantity of munitions and other supplies expended, countless in their variety and importance, and so on. Alongside the standard metrics come the equally standard arguments about strategic necessity, clearing the Channel ports, and providing cover for the French army, still wracked by ‘mutiny’ and incapable of carrying the burden of the war any longer (or so the traditional narratives goes... it is a nice way to imply that the British became the senior partners after 1917, which they did not).

After all the ink spilt on Passchendaele in the past century, is there any merit in wading back into its sodden, pockmarked morass? Can we shimmy over newly-laid duckboards of emotional and intellectual distance and decades of new research, safely traversing the intellectual moonscape which threatens to drown us in stagnant, muddy reasoning if we lose our footing, even momentarily?

In this short opinion article, such as it is, I want to talk a bit about the Third Battle of Ypres and where it sits in the context of 1917, and the wider war. By this, of course, I mean the ‘real war’, the Franco-German war; round two in a three-round cage match that lasted from 1870 to 1945. Just what was the French

position in 1917? How desperate were they? Was an attack in Flanders the best way to help them out? What were the prospects of the Allies, now so-called thanks to the ever-tardy arrival of the Americans, in the long-term? Did the Allied situation necessitate, facilitate or obviate the need for Third Ypres to take place? To start, let’s take a look at the French ‘mutiny’ (really, just a typical Gallic worker’s strike rather than a proper uprising). Just how bad was it?

The first acts of indiscipline probably occurred on 16 April, although this will always be a matter of some debate. Were the acts of indiscipline, which occurred before the battle had even started, an inkling of what was to come, or were they just the result of common

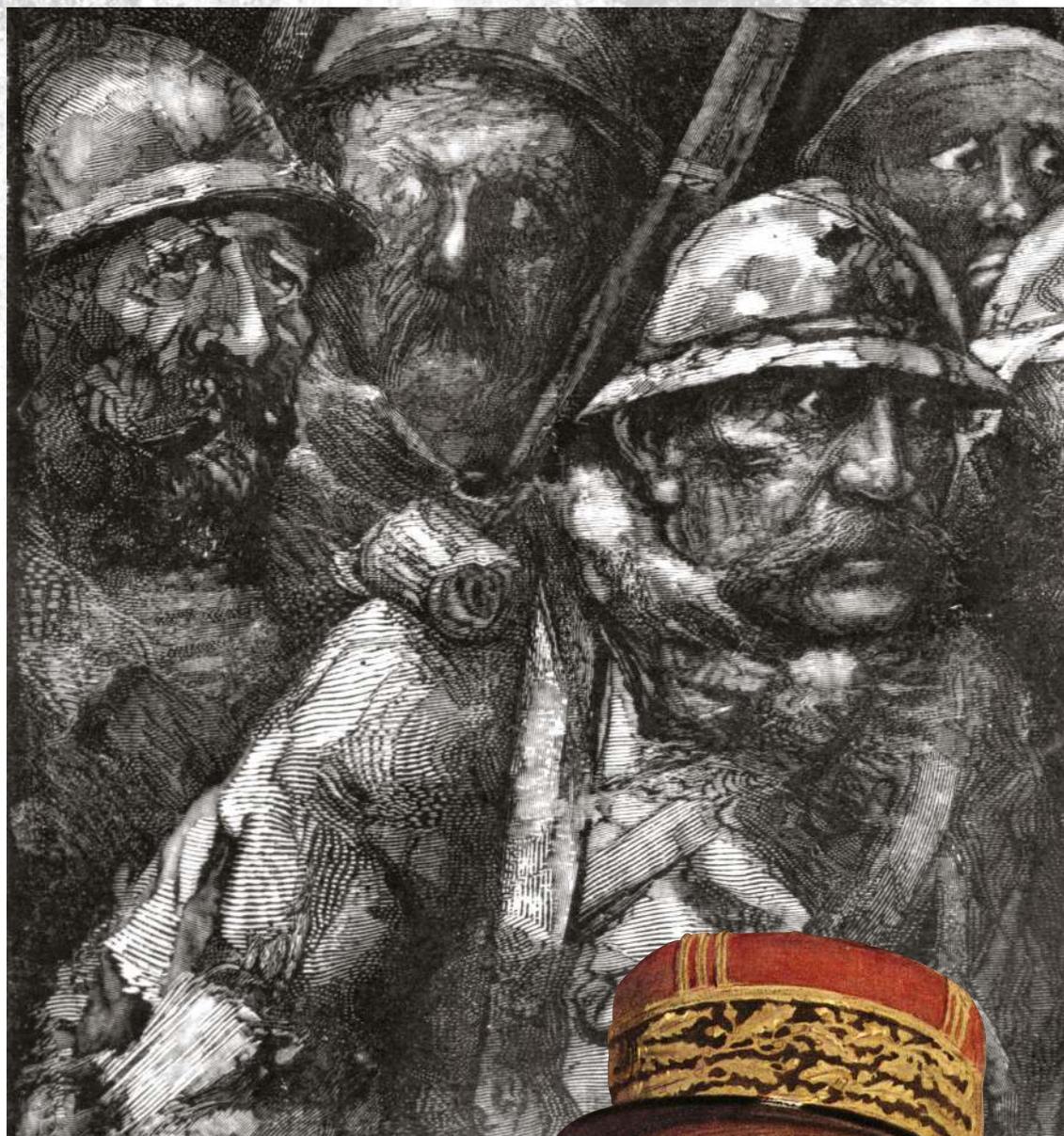
pre-battle jitters? A much more solid date is that given by Guy Pedroncini who pin-points the start of the French 'mutiny' to the collective indiscipline of the 20e 29 April 1917 *régiment d'infanterie* (RI) at Mourmelon-le-Grand. Eventually the 'mutiny' would grow to include 21,575 soldiers from 121 different regiments, a not-insignificant number of individuals, even in an army numbering roughly two million men.

The situation saw Philippe Pétain rapidly promoted to Nivelle's Chief of Staff, and on 17 May 1917 was made Commander in Chief in his own right. The mood subtly changed overnight when Pétain took over command of the French army. His reputation for cautious, meticulous care for the wellbeing of his soldiers was well known, and many felt that his appointment meant that the army was going to seriously consider the soldiers' demands. This is largely what Pétain did. He ordered an immediate stop to all new attacks, although this order was not followed religiously by his subordinates, and took crucial steps to improve the physical standard of living for his soldiers, increasing the amount of fresh meat and vegetables they had access to and improving leave procedures and the conditions of rear areas where soldiers were allowed more time to genuinely rest after coming off of frontline duty.

Alongside these 'carrot' measures Pétain also made substantial use of 'the stick'. He was aggressive in punishing insubordinate soldiers, sentencing 428 to death in 1917; including a brigadier, three sergeants and 30 corporals. Of course, most of the sentences were not carried out (only 75 were actually executed), but the dual effect of improving conditions and the existence of a seemingly harsh and rapid repression were enough to steady the ship in a few weeks' time.

Given Pétain's effective repression and conciliation of the French 'mutinies' how important was it for Haig to continue to launch attacks in the British sector, especially Passchendaele? Given the timing of the battle one could argue that it was not very important at all. During the Third Battle of Ypres the French launched two of their most successful operations of the entire war: the Second Battle of Verdun (20-29 August 1917) and the Battle of Malmaison (23-27 October 1917). Both of these battles were relatively short and sharp, but they were brutally effective at meeting their objectives; at Malmaison the French advanced over nine kilometres in just a few days. In both instances the French showed just how far their tactical doctrine had evolved. French batteries carefully neutralised and isolated German defensive positions, and judiciously used poison gas to help silence German artillery fire. Rolling barrages were used to good effect, especially at Malmaison where the German defensive arrangement was uncharacteristically poor, and the French generally performed to a high standard.

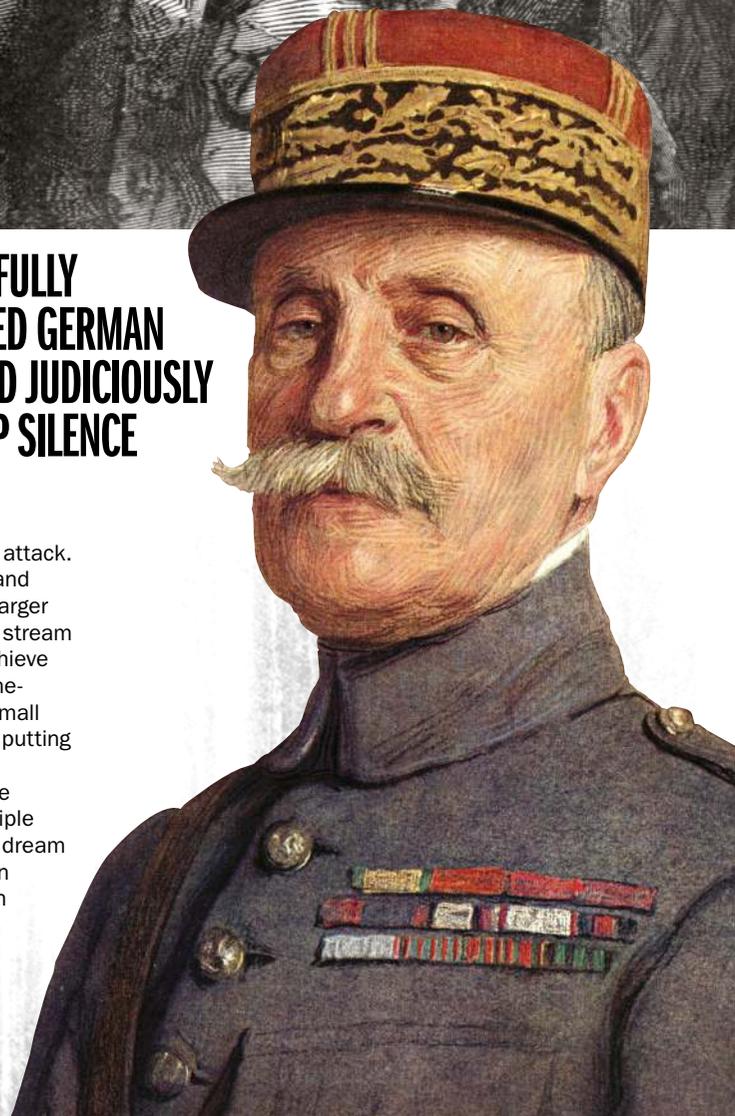
Of course, this reading requires substantial nuancing. The battles in question, while successful, were also small-scale and short-lived. This type of battle would come to be the predominant, and most successful, type during the Hundred Days in 1918, when Allied troops rapidly advanced against German defenders who had been operationally paralysed by the

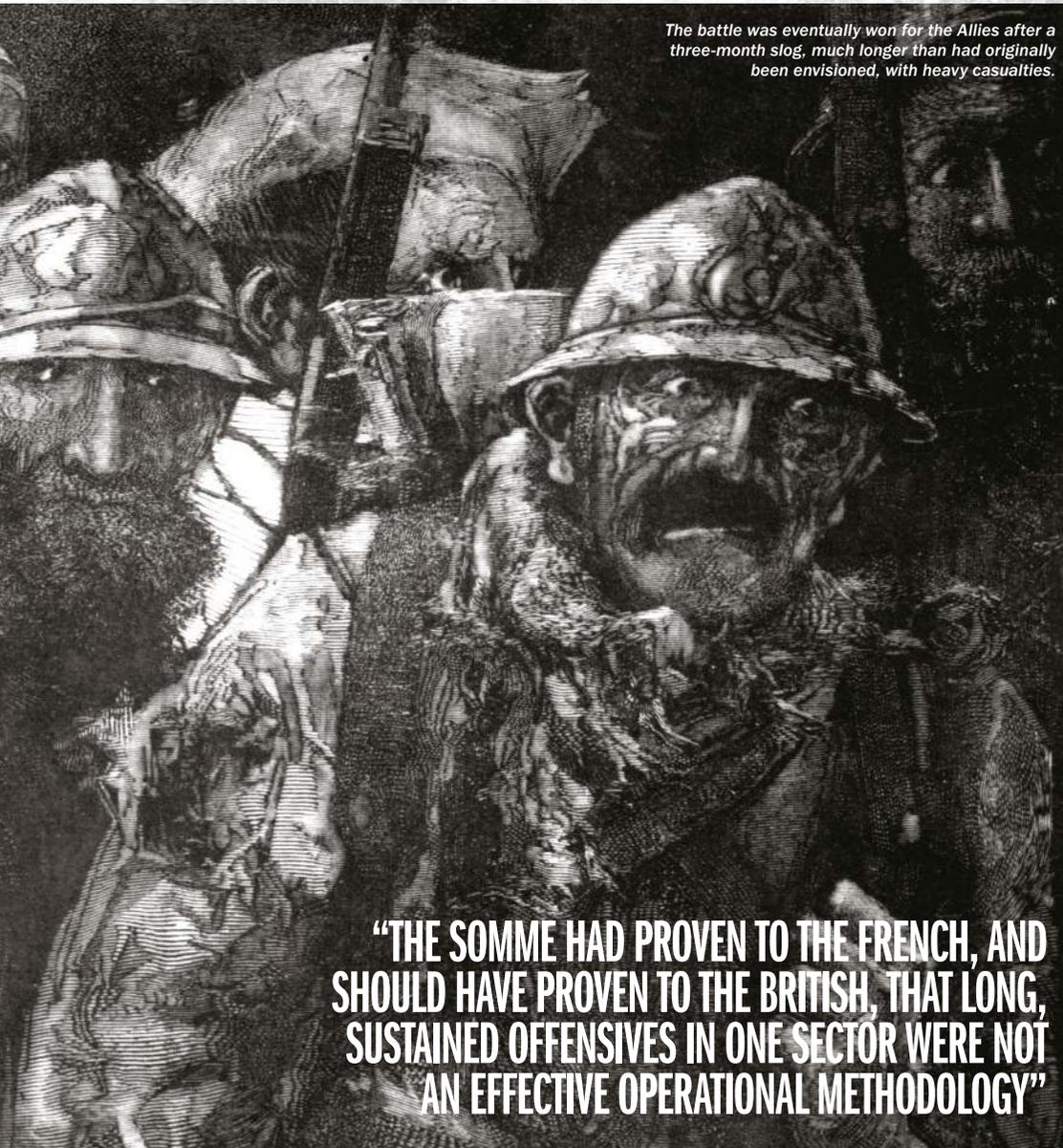


“FRENCH BATTERIES CAREFULLY NEUTRALISED AND ISOLATED GERMAN DEFENSIVE POSITIONS, AND JUDICIOUSLY USED POISON GAS TO HELP SILENCE GERMAN ARTILLERY FIRE”

tempo and unpredictability of the Allied attack. Unlike 1918, however, Second Verdun and Malmaison were not connected to any larger strategic goals. They were not part of a stream of similar battles, strung together to achieve strategic effect. They were, in effect, one-offs. Very good one-offs, but still very small compared to the effort the British were putting forth in Flanders at the same time.

Furthermore, we have to consider the synergistic effects of attacking in multiple places at once. This had been Joffre's dream throughout his tenure as commander in chief: pressure the Germans at enough different points simultaneously (he generally thought in terms of theatres,





The battle was eventually won for the Allies after a three-month slog, much longer than had originally been envisioned, with heavy casualties.

“THE SOMME HAD PROVEN TO THE FRENCH, AND SHOULD HAVE PROVEN TO THE BRITISH, THAT LONG, SUSTAINED OFFENSIVES IN ONE SECTOR WERE NOT AN EFFECTIVE OPERATIONAL METHODOLOGY”

rather than intra-theatre, but still) and eventually, somewhere, they would not be able to muster enough men and munitions to hold. Once one area cracked, the whole system might be structurally threatened.

While neither Second Verdun nor Malmaison were anywhere near enough to threaten the cohesion of the German army, they undoubtedly benefitted from the fact that German forces had been drawn north to face the British attack. It is at least partially for this reason that the French were able to substantially outnumber their German foes at both battles, especially in that most crucial metric on the Western Front: heavy artillery. Would the French have been able to mount such successful attacks if the British had not been waging a major battle in Flanders? It is hard to say. The benefit of maintaining the initiative in theory means the French could have found favourable circumstances somewhere (the Allies always launched major attacks from positions of substantial

Left: Henri Philippe Pétain commanded the French forces at Passchendaele. He was later discredited and sentenced to death for being a collaborator in World War Two

manpower and materiel superiority), but this may have been more difficult in the absence of the British army's effort further north.

While British efforts undoubtedly made French successes easier to come by this does not necessarily mean that the French needed 'saving' as late as August 1917, let alone September and October. This potentially raises the question 'was the battle worth fighting at all?' On one level the answer is obvious. The war could never have been won, by either side, without offensive action (this is part of the insight offered by the much maligned French pre-war theories collectively lumped together as the *offensive à outrance*). As such, attacking was necessary and Flanders is as good a place as any. It was relatively close to British logistical networks, and contrary to popular belief, the timing chosen was perfectly sensible.

Meteorologically there was no reason to expect anything other than warm, clear weather in and around Ypres in the late summer and early autumn. It seems unfair to blame Haig and the British for being subject to an unusually, and unseasonably, heavy downpour which transformed the Flanders fields into the

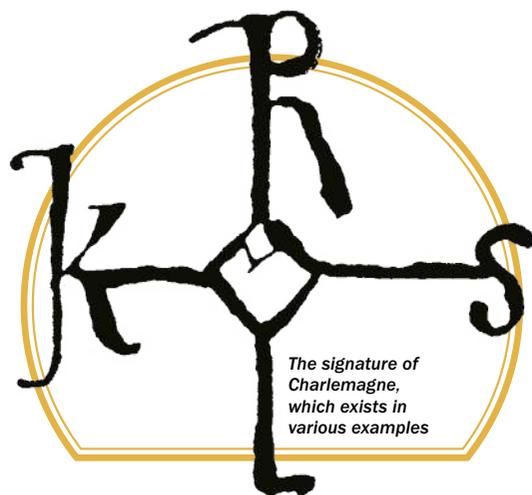
thick, viscous mud synonymous with the battle. Of course, this does not necessarily mean the British should have maintained the attack as long as they did. The Somme had proven to the French, and should have proven to the British, that long, sustained offensives in one sector were not an effective operational methodology. However, operationally, once the men and materiel are gathered together in one place there is often little choice but to press on and hope for the best, especially with the end of the campaigning season approaching, and the likelihood of being able to relocate and attack elsewhere slim.

There is, of course, the argument that the British not merely could have, but should have, done 'better' at Third Ypres than they ultimately did. These arguments, forever tempting, need to be treated with immense caution. It is always easier to imagine a better plan, or better execution, in hindsight; especially when it is the hindsight of a full century, knowing everything we know now that they wouldn't (or couldn't).

In sheer mathematical terms, at least using the statistical breakdown provided by François Cailleteau in his interesting 2008 book *Gagner la grande guerre* the period of late 1917 was the best stretch of effectively independent action the British ever achieved (depending on how one wants to classify the Hundred Days, and accepting that no action on the Western Front was truly 'independent'). At Loos, according to Cailleteau, Britain killed 0.43 Germans for every British soldier lost. In the oft-lauded battles of spring and early summer 1917, like Messines, the ratio climbed to 0.56. At Passchendaele and Cambrai, sadly not differentiated from each other in Cailleteau's analysis, the British achieved a rate of 0.68 (the French managed 1.04 at Malmaison and Second Verdun, albeit with all of the benefits earlier discussed working heavily in their favour).

On one level that is a rank failure; far more Britons were being killed than Germans. On another level it is the best the British had done on their own up to that point. Throughout the whole of 1917 the British were able to inflict roughly 536,000 casualties on the Germans. To put that in perspective they had inflicted 498,000 casualties in 1915 and 1916 combined. To take those same periods and look at losses, the British suffered 818,000 casualties in 1917 and 931,000 from January 1915 to December 1916. Britain was inflicting heavier losses and taking fewer casualties, proportionally speaking, in 1917 than they had done at any other point in the war up to then (although the numbers are vastly outstripped by the British performance in 1918, when the five British armies captured more enemy men, land and materiel than any other Allied force on the Western Front).

So, was it worth it? That is an impossible question to ask. Philosophically one might just as easily ask if the war as a whole was worth it. Within the strict context of the First World War, however, Third Ypres compares reasonably well to any analogous effort, in terms of size and methodology, that you may wish to mention. If Third Ypres is not justifiable, then arguably no major battle on the Western Front was. Whether that is merely faint praise or stark condemnation, however, is up for debate.



CHARLEMAGNE

EMPEROR OF EUROPE

Charles the Great, known as the father of Europe, created an empire that would last 1,000 years. To secure it he fought continuously, on multiple fronts, throughout his long reign

WORDS MURRAY DAHM

Charlemagne came to power at a time when Europe was made up of many small kingdoms and principalities. Since the fall of the Roman Empire in the 5th century, it had also faced invasion from various peoples who had established kingdoms of their own, such as the Visigoths and Muslims in Spain.

There were also new peoples on the outskirts of Europe who were either asserting themselves for the first time, such as the Danes and Norse, or intent on breaking into Europe itself, like the Avars. Europe also clung to the past, and saw itself as a continuation of the Western Roman Empire. Throughout his reign (768-814 CE), Charlemagne, his sons and commanders fought almost continuous wars of expansion and aggression. By the end of his reign, he had created an empire that bore his name (Carolingian), which reached from Spain to the Balkans, and Italy to the Baltic.

First lessons in War

Charlemagne became co-king of the Franks at the age of 26 with his 17-year-old brother Carloman in 768. Despite his youth, he already possessed a decade of experience as a commander, having fought in the wars of his father, Pepin the Short. Our major source for his reign is the *Vita Karoli Magni*, written by Einhard in the 9th century. This tells us

that Charlemagne was 70 when he died in January 814. Einhard was an eyewitness to Charlemagne's reign, and wrote under his son, Louis the Pious. This source gives us remarkable and reliable insights, but Einhard also wrote to show Charlemagne in the best possible light, and so omits or slants several episodes that would not have suited that purpose. Einhard wrote that:

Charlemagne was by far the most able and noble-spirited of all those who ruled over nations in this time. He never withdrew from an enterprise which he had once begun and was determined to see through to the end, simply because of the labour involved; and danger never deterred him.

Although these are presented as noble and positive traits, we see a glimpse of Charlemagne's determination and even his aggression. The large number of sieges he undertook may also be a testament to his determination and tenacity.

At the age of 15, Charlemagne's father had given him the command of duchies in Austrasia, whose loyalty was suspect. He was also involved in military expeditions in Aquitania against the rebellious lords there, who had resisted Pepin's rule for 20 years. They were assisted by the Vascones (Basques). Usually a Carolingian ruler commanded in person, and

so we can expect that the military training of Charlemagne began at an early age. He may have accompanied his father on campaigns aged as young as 13. If the king could not be present then he would be represented on the field by his *mojordome*. Command in frontier regions was given to loyal vassal subjects, and so there was an opportunity for mobility and reward if you proved yourself reliable. Success in the Aquitania campaigns finally came in 768, shortly before Pepin's death. Frankish law demanded that the empire be divided between Pepin's sons, Charlemagne and Carloman. This law would cause great problems for Europe in the time of Charlemagne's grandsons.

The duke of Aquitania lost no time in rebelling again. Charlemagne marched against him and asked for support from his brother, but they argued, and Charlemagne was forced to fight alone. He did so and won a swift victory. There was tension between the brothers as each jockeyed for position, but on 4 December 771, Carloman died, probably of natural causes despite his young age (he was 21). This left Charlemagne as sole ruler.

Charlemagne needed to assert his dominance over his (already large) domain, and he spent a decade aggressively bending his subjects to his will. His first act was to ensure that all his brother's followers swore allegiance to him. Charlemagne was an imposing figure, estimated



“BY THE END OF HIS REIGN, HE HAD CREATED AN EMPIRE THAT BORE HIS NAME (CAROLINGIAN), WHICH REACHED FROM SPAIN TO THE BALKANS, AND ITALY TO THE BALTIC”

CHARLES THE GREAT



We are remarkably well informed about the appearance of Charlemagne, from eyewitnesses and the apparent survival of his bones, preserved as relics in Aix. These allow us to estimate his height at six feet, making him one of the tallest men of his day. Einhard tells us that he was 'heavily built, sturdy and of considerable stature' with 'a round head, large and lively eyes, a slightly large nose' and 'a bright and cheerful expression,' although he had a short fat neck. This portrait finds some corroboration in coinage of the day.

Left: A late denier of Charlemagne showing his portrait.

Charlemagne was responsible for long lasting reforms across all manner of fields, including coinage. His monetary reforms are still apparent in the British pound (livre, from the Latin libra for pound). The penny and shilling can also trace their lineage back to Charlemagne's reforms (240 deniers in the pound (hence the abbreviation d.) and a pound being 20 sous (shillings)).





at six feet tall, one of the tallest men of the age, but he nonetheless needed to prove himself to the kingdom at large, meaning war was not far away. The Saxons, pagans who lived between the Oder and Elbe rivers, had been pushing southwards. In 772, Charlemagne launched an unprovoked attack on the Saxons to show his mettle to his followers and prove his stature to his subjects. He may also have sought to 'solve' the Saxon problem decisively. He warred with the Saxons for 30 years, fighting 18 battles, and his determination, tenacity and success regardless of the effort required in his campaigns reveals aspects of his personality his contemporaries could have learned from.

Many of Charlemagne's campaigns are either dealt with briefly in sources like the Royal Frankish Annals (*Annales Regni Francorum*) or embellished into legend, such as in the Song of Roland. Some of these accounts are not particularly useful, although we can sometimes extrapolate details. For the Saxon campaign in 772, we know that Charlemagne assembled his nobles at Worms, marched into Saxony, captured Eresburg, and got as far as the pagan idol of the Irminsul (a giant tree trunk considered one of the pillars of heaven), which he destroyed and then plundered Saxon territory. As brief as this account is, it tells us from the start that this was both a military and religious conflict. We also know that Charlemagne conducted many sieges in his wars, often without details of how. Siege techniques such as ladders and battering rams had been in place for centuries. The Avars may have introduced the mangonel to European warfare, although such technology may also have arrived via Muslim Spain.

“THE NATURE OF CHARLEMAGNE’S EMPIRE WAS SUCH THAT WHILE HE WAS OCCUPIED IN ONE PLACE, REBELLIOUS REGIONS WOULD THROW OFF THE YOKE AND REVOLT”

Sometimes we can deduce that Charlemagne sought to penetrate right to the centre of enemy territory. He also sent multiple armies, two into Spain in 778 and three separate forces into Bavaria in 787 and 788. In 775, his campaign against the Saxons penetrated far into hostile territory, reaching Oker and he took prisoners from three districts. They had to accept baptism and then recognise the rule of the Franks.

The nature of Charlemagne's empire was such that while he was occupied in one place, rebellious regions would throw off the yoke and revolt. While Charlemagne was in Italy in 773, the Saxons took revenge for the campaign of 772, and sacked several churches and monasteries. Charlemagne regarded these acts as violated treaties. Each campaigning season would end with a new treaty with the Saxons, and these were virtually all broken. However, the treaties never encompassed all Saxons, who had no centralised leadership. Oaths and hostages were a major part of securing the peace for Charlemagne throughout Europe. He held hostages at his court from across his empire and vassal states beyond it.

Some aspects of Charlemagne's many campaigns remain controversial, despite the overwhelmingly positive image of him that survives. Sometimes the sources are entirely silent. It is probable that the Royal Frankish Annals are Charlemagne's own version of events; certainly a version of which he approved. They provide legitimacy for all of his actions, and ignore events and setbacks (such as in Spain in 778). They also exaggerate some successes – especially those against the Saxons. Charlemagne also became a protector

Above: A 13th century miniature depicting Charlemagne and his knights fighting from ship against a town. This possibly relates to campaigns in Sicily or perhaps the capture of Barcelona. Most depictions of Charlemagne show him in the arms of the day of the illustration rather than of his own period.

of the Pope, just as his father had been. Indeed, this protection had seen his father supplant the Merovingian kings of Francia, and saw Charlemagne become the champion of the pope and Christianity. This culminated in his being invited to interfere in Italian affairs, and eventually crowned Holy Roman Emperor in 800.

There is no doubt Charlemagne was sincere in his Christianity, but there was also opportunism in his siding with the pope. Moreover, he saw the opportunity to enlarge his power and his empire. Charlemagne's campaigns against the pagan Saxons (773-804) were all wars of aggressive, forcible conversion. They were conducted with the catch cry of "Baptism or Death". Yet resistance continued, and when Saxon leader Widukind organised a fresh round of resistance in the 780s, Charlemagne personally led the campaign to exact vengeance for yet another broken treaty. This led to the massacre of 4,500 Saxon prisoners at Verdun in 782. Campaigning continued, and in 783 Charlemagne twice threw himself into the middle of the fray, so furious was he at Saxon treachery, according to Einhard. Even Widukind was eventually forced to accept baptism.

Charlemagne also warred with the Muslims in Spain. According to tradition, he fought to preserve and assist the Christian kingdoms that remained in the Iberian peninsula. This meant, in reality, adding them as states that owed their loyalties to him. Not all his campaigns were ones of faith, however. He also warred with rival Christians in Spain, Italy, and in several rebellions with his empire. In 787 he ruthlessly overthrew the legitimate (Merovingian) duke of Bavaria, and was at pains to justify his actions. He eliminated the duchy of Bavaria, and forced

THE STIRRUP

ONE OF THE MOST IMPORTANT DEVELOPMENTS IN WARFARE DURING THE AGE OF CHARLEMAGNE WAS THE ADOPTION OF THE STIRRUP

The adoption of the stirrup, which allowed heavy cavalry to charge with lances couched, changed European warfare forever. There is evidence that it was being used by the Avars and Lombards before the adoption by Carolingian armies. No stirrup has been found in a Frankish grave of the period, and it is possible that mounted troops continued to use the same non-stirrup methods they had for generations. Effective cavalry had existed for millennia without stirrups, making use of thrown spears, bows, or fighting with swords on horseback.

What the stirrup allowed was charging to take greater advantage of the mass of the horseman. There are illustrations of stirrups in the generations following Charlemagne's



Above: Illuminated miniature of Charlemagne's Paladins, in the *Chroniques of France*, 1494

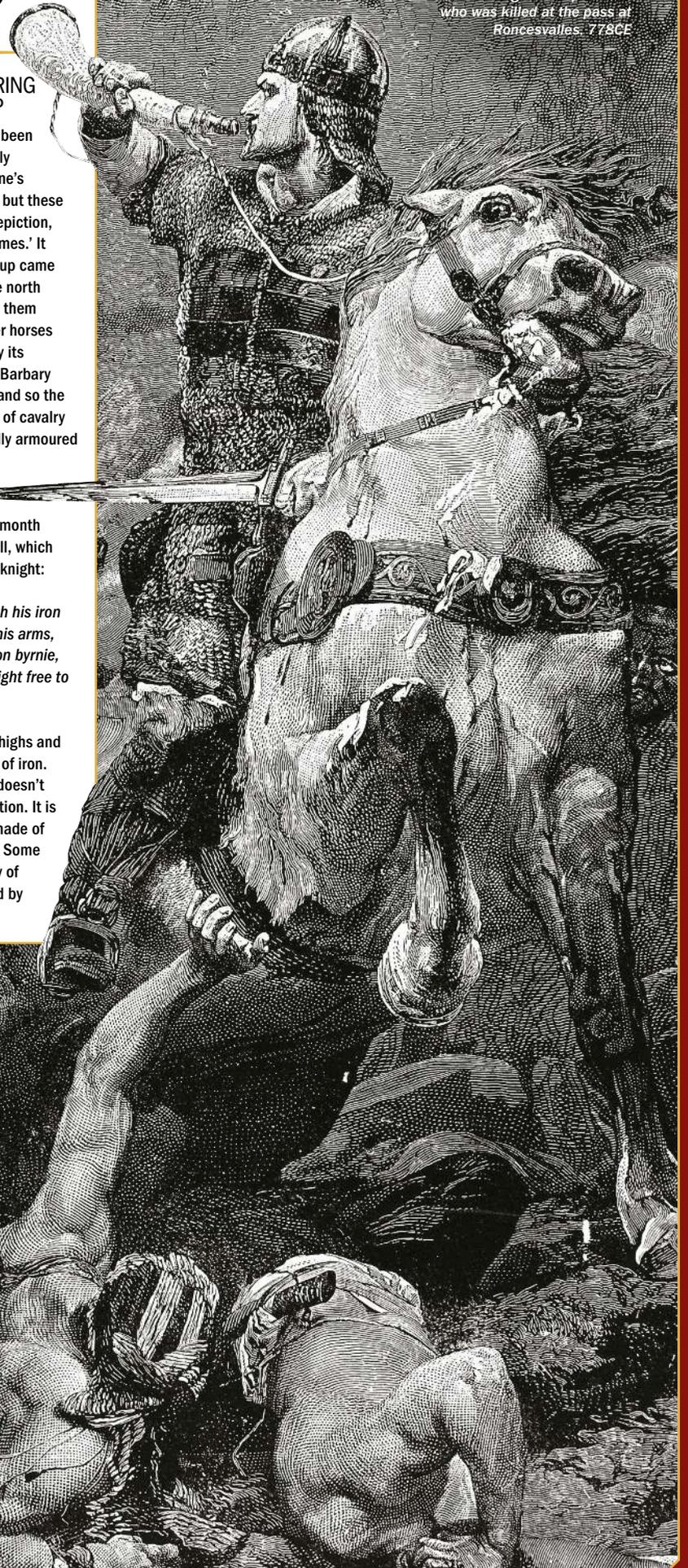
death, which implies that they had been adopted some time before. Similarly some illustrations from Charlemagne's reign show cavalry without stirrups but these may reflect a tradition of artistic depiction, which hadn't yet 'moved with the times.' It is probable that the use of the stirrup came from contact with the armies to the north of the empire but what really made them effective was the use of the sturdier horses of North Africa, brought to Spain by its Muslim conquerors. These Barb or Barbary horses could handle more weight, and so the subsequent increase in the armour of cavalry began, eventually leading to the fully armoured knight later in the Middle Ages.

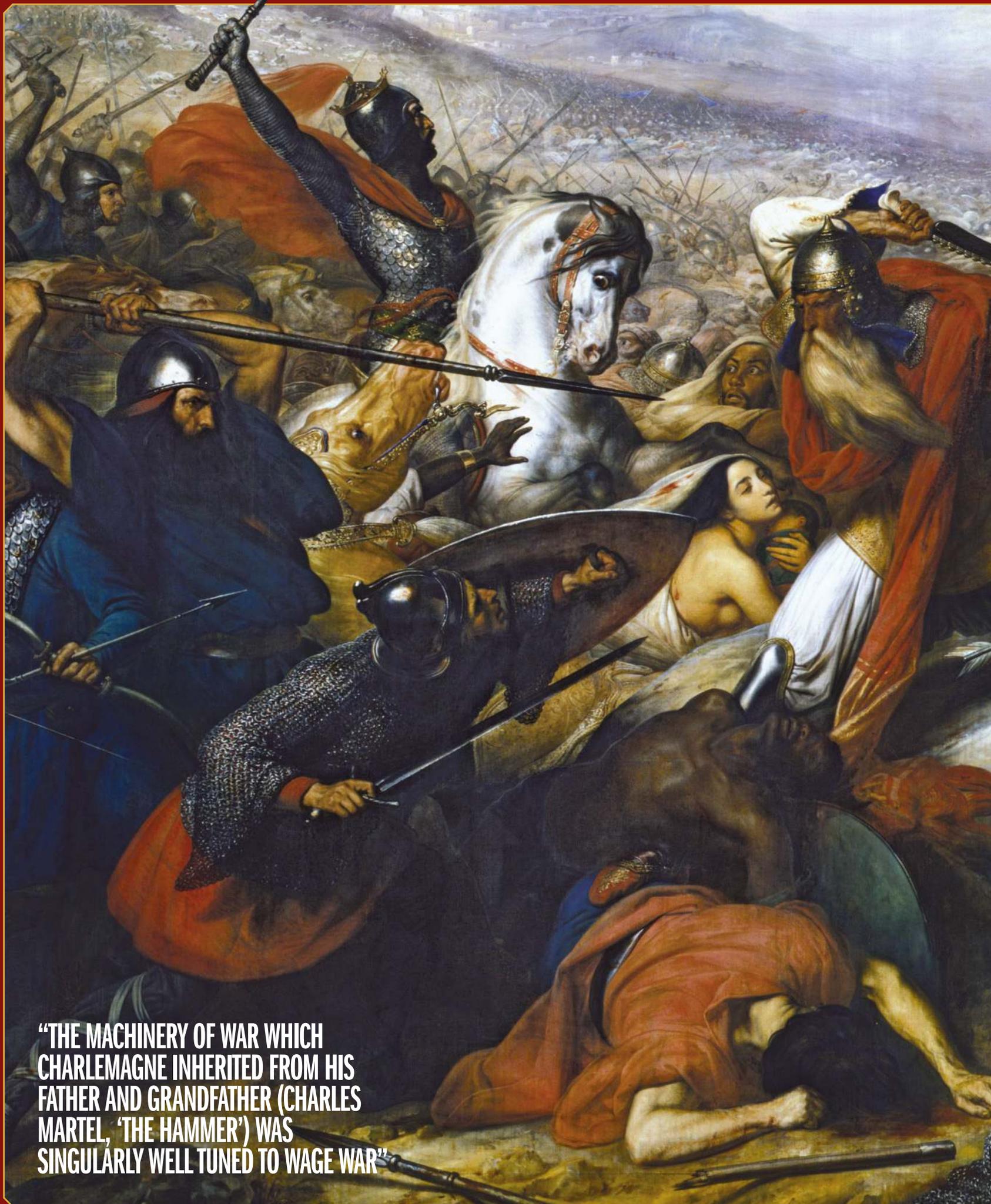
We have a description of Charlemagne outside Pavia in 773 (during a ten-month siege) from the monastery of St Gall, which makes him sound very much like a knight:

Thus appeared the Iron King with his iron helm, with sleeves of iron mail on his arms, his broad chest protected by an iron byrnie, an iron lance in his left hand, his right free to grasp his unconquered sword.

He also wore protection on his thighs and greaves on his legs. His shield was of iron. The image of the armoured knight doesn't seem so far away from this description. It is possible that the byrnie coat was made of mail or scales and other materials. Some illustrations seem to show a variety of materials, but these are not trusted by all historians.

Depiction of the Death of Roland, the most celebrated and talented of Charlemagne's 12 paladins, who was killed at the pass at Roncevaux, 778CE





“THE MACHINERY OF WAR WHICH CHARLEMAGNE INHERITED FROM HIS FATHER AND GRANDFATHER (CHARLES MARTEL, ‘THE HAMMER’) WAS SINGULARLY WELL TUNED TO WAGE WAR”

Charles Martel, Charlemagne's grandfather, won the Battle of Tours in 732 securing Christian dominance in western Europe



Right: Charlemagne, or Charles the Great, depicted with his royal regalia

its last duke, Tassilo, to become a monk. The defeat at Roncesvalles in 778 was perpetrated by untrustworthy (Christian) Vascones.

Even though Charlemagne was painted as the shining Christian champion, he was both a ruthless and pragmatic king and commander. He often put a great deal of thought and planning into campaigns, but could also be impulsive and opportunistic. This was rewarded in his actions towards the pope, but in Spain in 778, quite the opposite happened. He could accept the submission of Muslim or pagan leaders when it suited him, but he could be brutal to even fellow Christians when he felt the need.

He also made and broke alliances when it suited. In 777, he agreed to help the Muslim Sulaiman al-Arabi against the emir of Abd ar-Rahmann. There was as much in-fighting in Muslim Spain as there was throughout Christian Europe. This allowed him to claim that he was fighting a defensive campaign, when in fact it was yet another war of aggression. The later tradition of making this a proto-crusade on behalf of Spanish Christians, however, could not have been further from the truth.

Charlemagne underestimated the dangers of the Spanish campaign, and failed to carry out any intelligence gathering. The campaign was almost a complete disaster, something our sources try not to convey. The one thing that may have saved Charlemagne was the amount of provisions he required his armies to have, as this allowed them to retreat through hostile territory. The allied cities of Barcelona and Zaragoza refused to let the Franks enter, and the sieges were unsuccessful, forcing the whole expedition to retire. On the retreat up the Ebro, the rearguard was ambushed, not by Muslim forces (as the later Song of Roland would tell), but by Christian Vascones. The rear guard was massacred and the baggage train plundered. A number of high-ranking commanders (Eggihard, Anshelm and Roland) fell. Eggihard and Anshelm were among the most important members of the Frankish aristocracy. The Vascones melted away so quickly that Charlemagne could not exact revenge.

The Carolingian Military Machine

The machinery of war that Charlemagne inherited from his father and grandfather, Charles Martel, was singularly well-tuned to wage war. All of Charlemagne's vassals were expected to serve militarily, and all free men were expected to serve if needed. This service included bishops, abbots and abbesses; they too could be called upon to provide armed men or other provisions of war according to the wealth of their estates. These men would be drawn together by a royal summons or bannum, and if a mobilisation of all free men in a particular area was called for, it was known as the *lantweri*.

We can see in these procedures the beginnings of feudalism. Each ruler or governor of a particular area within the empire (usually someone who had sworn allegiance or was of known loyalty) had a personal retinue of trained and professional warriors, which could be called upon by the king. Failure to do so was punishable by a hefty

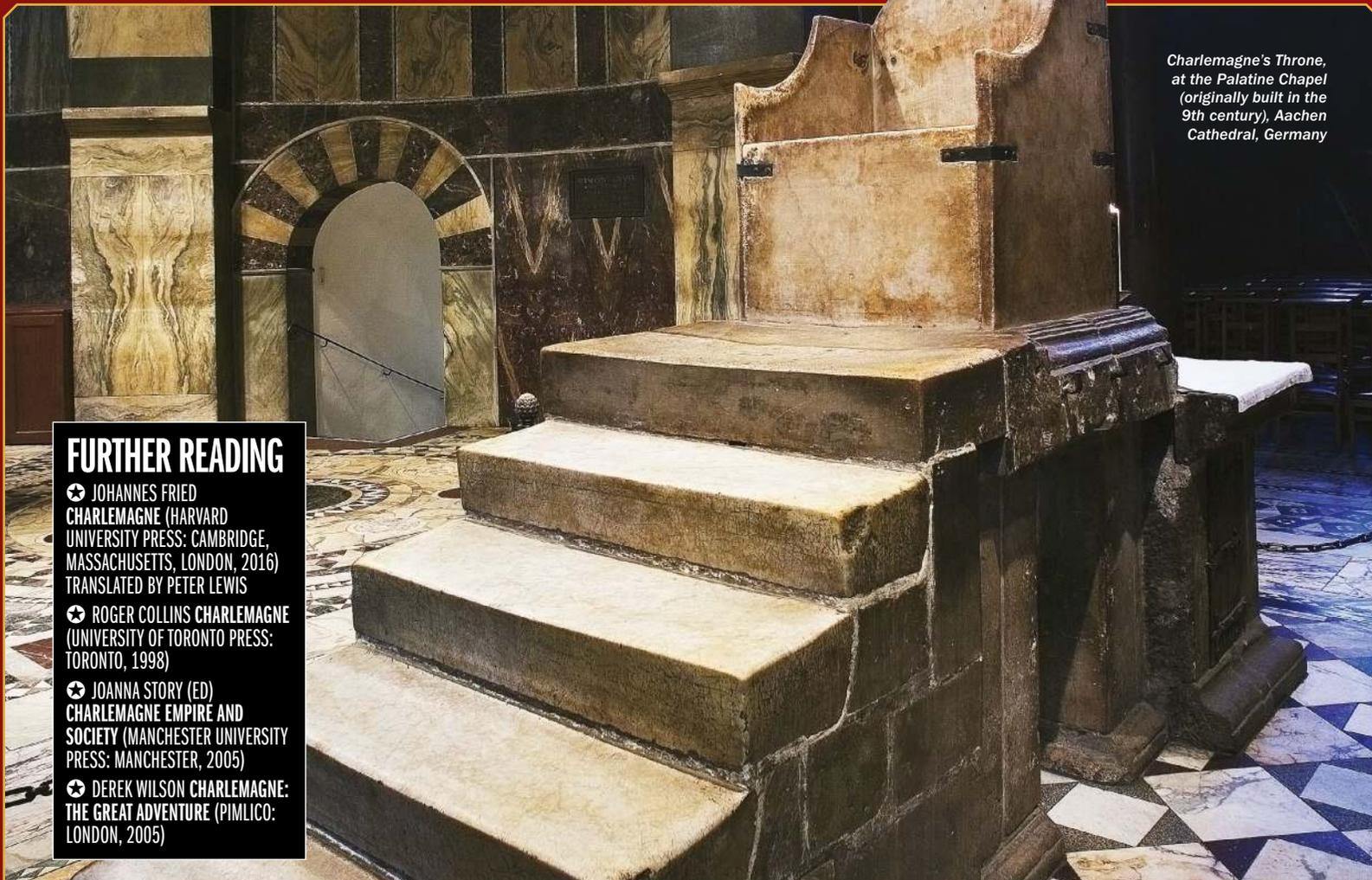
“THE CAROLINGIAN ARMIES USUALLY ENJOYED A NUMERICAL SUPERIORITY OVER THEIR ENEMIES, AND THEY HAD VERY HIGH MORALE DUE TO THEIR CONTINUED SUCCESS”

fine, or even death. Estimates of the available manpower within Charlemagne's kingdom vary although some place early Carolingian numbers 3,000 cavalry and up to 10,000 infantry. By the end of Charlemagne's reign, these numbers may have risen as high as 35,000 cavalry and 100,000 infantry, although not all of these would ever be called upon.

Most would garrison the hostile frontier zones. Levels of training also varied, and the general mobilisation would have called on every able bodied man. The high-status aristocrats spent most of their time training or hunting (which was itself training for the techniques of war). Charlemagne himself made sure that he went on a hunting expedition every autumn. Nonetheless, the Carolingian armies usually enjoyed a numerical superiority over their enemies, and they had a very high morale due to their continued success. Charlemagne demanded enough supplies to keep his armies in the field for three months and six months' worth of clothes and weapons.

Only the wealthiest could afford to provide the equipment and horses necessary to be a cavalryman and this gave rise, eventually, to the concept of the medieval knight. It is difficult to assess how many men in Carolingian armies were cavalry and how many were mounted infantry. The adoption of mounted armies by the Carolingians is usually argued to be because of the effectiveness of the stirrup, adopted widely in Europe during the period. However, it may be possible that mounted armies were adopted because of contact with the armies of Muslim Spain, which were also primarily mounted. Thus, the use of mounted infantry (who travelled on horseback, but dismounted to fight, so were much cheaper to maintain than actual cavalry) allowed effective contests with such enemies.

Again, there are different theories regarding exactly how armies were composed, although by Charlemagne's death the dominating image of the Carolingian warrior was of the cavalryman. The axe (the *fransiska* which had given the Franks their name) was abandoned in favour of cheaper spears and the single-bladed seax for infantry. Sometimes two spears were carried; one for throwing, and the other for hand-to-hand combat. Archery also became important in infantry warfare. The dominant weapons in cavalry warfare were the (thrown) spear and javelin. These were replaced over the period by the heavy lance. The sword remained the most expensive, high-status weapon to produce, reflected in the important place it is given in the sources. Both Charlemagne ('*Joyeuse*') and Roland ('*Durendal*') and others had named swords in the heroic legends, which sprang up about their exploits.



Charlemagne's Throne, at the Palatine Chapel (originally built in the 9th century), Aachen Cathedral, Germany

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When battle was joined, infantry dismounted and fought on foot, advancing to within a spear's throw of each other. They hurled insults at each other and then charged into battle proper. Units were led by the magnate who provided them. One favoured tactic was the feigned retreat; units would wear their shields on their back and try to get the enemy to leave their positions and pursue them. Battle often degenerated into a series of duels, foot soldier versus foot soldier, or mounted 'knight' versus mounted 'knight'. In such circumstances, the superior numbers, morale and provisions of the Carolingians would be telling. We have poetic accounts of battle from the period (the Hildebrandslied), which may reflect some of the realities of battle. We also have later poems like the Waltharius (from the 10th century) that may preserve accurate details. Additionally, there are contemporary illustrations in several psalters that depict contemporary warriors. We know that Charlemagne charged into the thick of the melee on at least two occasions.

Marches and forts

Charlemagne continued the policy of his father by protecting his empire with buffer zones known as Marches. These frontier provinces would be manned by local warriors housed in fortifications. Several of these Marches became the scenes of incessant warfare. The most famous was the Spanish March at the foot of the Pyrenees, but there were marches wherever the border faced hostile foes (in Dalmatia, Italy, and beyond the Weser, Elbe and Danube rivers. Fortifications followed late Roman models

“FURTHER CAMPAIGNS WERE UNDERTAKEN IN 791, AND ARE AGAIN FRAMED AS CHRISTIAN VENGEANCE FOR PAGAN CRIMES”

(rounded squares without turrets), usually on important crossroads. In frontier regions, forts were palisaded earthworks, usually round, although in Saxony they were rectangular. Since these were built by local manpower, they probably continued to use traditional tribal shapes. Some also had a moat. The marches themselves seem to have held few actual fortifications, since they were designed to be more fluid in nature.

Eventually, in 804, authority was stamped on all the Saxons. Spain also yielded success after the near disaster of 778. Under Charlemagne's son Louis, gains were made from the 780s onwards. Cordoba itself was raided, and 45,000 prisoners taken in 793. In 801, Barcelona, the most important port in the region, was finally taken by an expedition led nominally by Charlemagne's son, the 21-year old Louis. When he took Bavaria in 788, it brought him into conflict with the pagan Avars, who launched an attack on Bavaria that same year. The Avars had been in conflict with the Byzantine empire for at least three centuries. Charlemagne triumphed against the Avars, although we can rely only on Frankish sources, which tell us of a succession of victories. Further campaigns were undertaken in 791, and are again framed as Christian vengeance for pagan crimes.

There were also campaigns in Italy, especially against Benevento, which brought Charlemagne

into conflict with the Byzantine Empire. Our sources are often silent on these campaigns, and they were often conducted in Charlemagne's absence, under his son Pipin. This, of course, also had an important religious element, since it involved the Western and the Eastern churches. The declaration of Charlemagne as Holy Roman Emperor in 800 was also political and religious manoeuvre by the pope.

In a reign of more than 40 years, Charlemagne spent much of it fighting, either in person or through subordinates. Often campaigns were ongoing in several regions at once. Overall, his successes outweighed his reverses and he persisted long enough to turn even those into success eventually. One of the reasons for Charlemagne's successes were his ruthlessness and pragmatism, but also militarily, his perseverance and determination. The exact nature of Carolingian warfare (and the place of the stirrup) will probably never be resolved, but Charlemagne's ongoing success relied on more than a technological advance. His systems, the origins of Feudalism allowed him to call upon massive resources. And he had excellent logistics in place, which allowed his numerically superior forces to engage on multiple fronts and extract themselves when they got into trouble. Charlemagne's military legacy remains relevant today, and students of military history would do well to consider the reasons for his success.

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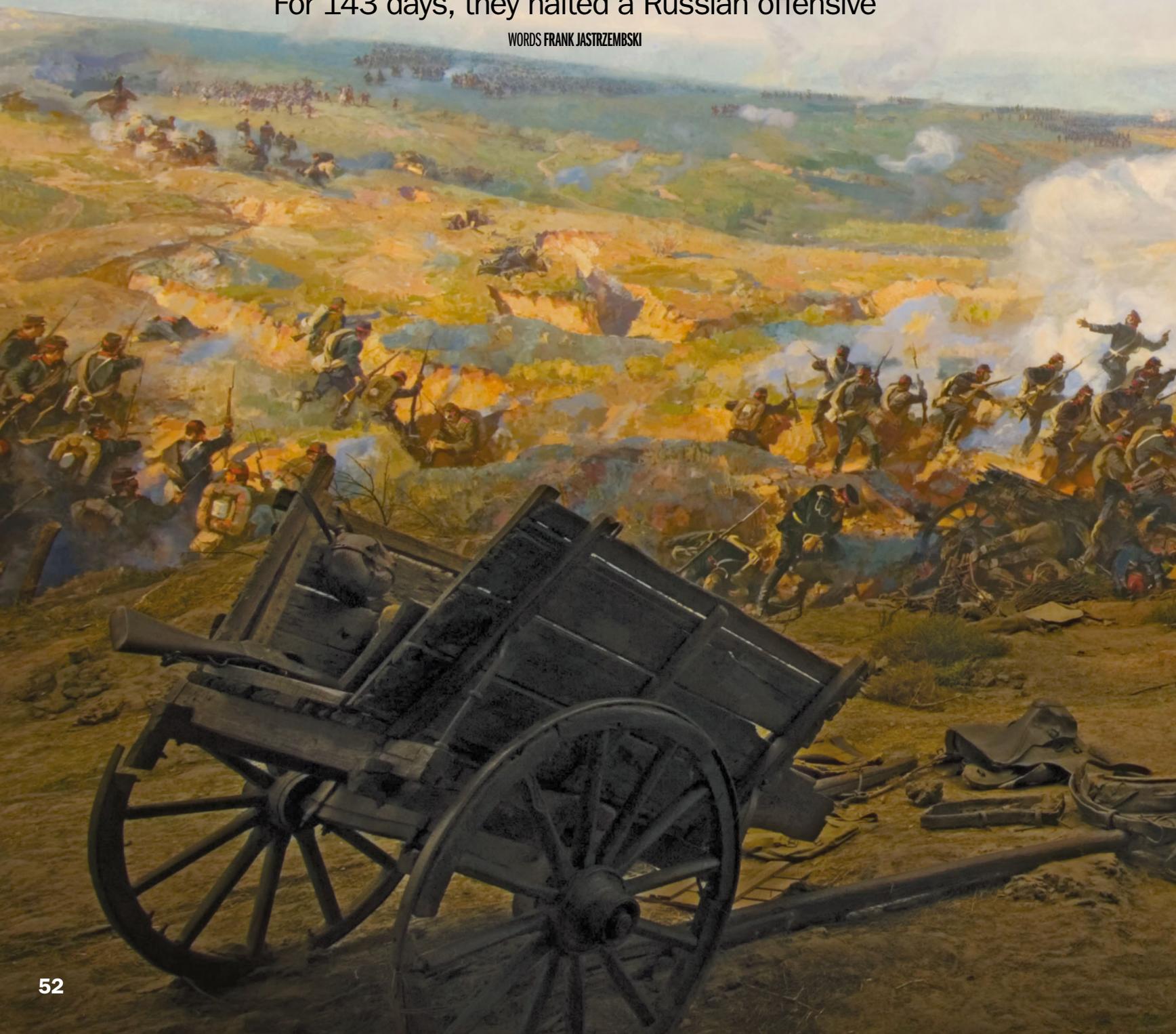
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Great Battles

SIEGE OF PLEVNA

The British have Waterloo. The Greeks, Thermopylae. The Turks, Plevna.
For 143 days, they halted a Russian offensive

WORDS FRANK JASTRZEMSKI





PLEVNA (MODERN PLEVEN), BULGARIA 20 JULY – 10 DECEMBER 1877

The ten-month war between the Russian and Ottoman Empires from April 1877 to March 1878 remains one of the most understudied (and under-appreciated) of the 19th century, despite its political, military, economic and social repercussions. The shifting political boundaries following the war can be linked to inducing revolutionary fervour that led to the brutal murder of Archduke Franz Ferdinand in 1914. The gruesome reality of how wars would be waged in the 20th century also became painfully apparent during this conflict. The advances in modern breech-loading firepower and robust fortifications were faced with tactics from the Napoleonic era (Russian General Skobelev would concur, observing that, “the shovel and the breech-loading rifle have changed everything”).

Roughly 285,000 soldiers (Ottoman, Russian, Bulgarian and Romanian) perished during this brief conflict, and thousands more civilian refugees succumbed to starvation, disease, or were murdered. Of the thousands

of military fatalities, about 75,000 men (26 per cent) fell during the savage battles waged outside the small Bulgarian village of Plevna from the summer to winter of 1877.

War erupted for the eleventh time in over a three-century period between the Russians and Ottomans in April 1877. The Russians crossed over Romania’s borders, in a stroke ‘liberating’ it from the Ottoman yoke, and in return Romanians would send thousands of soldiers to fight and die alongside the Russians. The ancient and irresolute Ottoman commander-in-chief, Abdülkerim Nadir Pasha, with no clear plan or objective for countering a Russian thrust onto Ottoman soil, left about 160,000 soldiers strung out along hundreds of miles on the banks of the Danube River to counter the anticipated invasion. By July, four Russian corps successfully forded the Danube River at Sistova with little opposition, exploiting the indecisiveness and poor planning of the Ottoman high command. The Ottoman scheme to keep the Russians pinned on the other side of the Danube quickly imploded.

“ROUGHLY 285,000 SOLDIERS (OTTOMAN, RUSSIAN, BULGARIAN AND ROMANIAN) PERISHED”

Despite a courageous and remarkable attempt by Osman and his men to defend against Russian attack, it all ended in surrender

OPPOSING FORCES



OTTOMAN ARMY

LEADER:
Osman Pasha
INFANTRY:
72 battalions
CAVALRY:
21 squadrons
ARTILLERY:
88 guns
TOTAL:
34,000 men

RUSSIAN ARMY

LEADERS:
Tsar Alexander II,
Duke Nicholas,
Prince Carol I of Romania
INFANTRY:
132 battalions
CAVALRY:
66 squadrons
ARTILLERY:
487 guns
TOTAL:
90,000-100,000 men

The Russians entered Ottoman territory (Bulgaria) with their eyes fixed on the capital of Constantinople to the south, advancing in that direction at an alarming rate. It appeared as if the Russians would virtually outmanoeuvre the stunned Ottoman commanders who chose to remain on the defensive, isolating and destroying each of their armies in turn, and conquering the Muslim capital with little opposition. None of the senior Russian commanders could have speculated that one intrepid Ottoman general and his small army would threaten to derail their grand offensive and nearly send them reeling back across the Danube in defeat.

A professionally trained soldier with experience fighting in the Crimean War, the 45-year-old Osman Pasha proved to be one of the Ottoman Empire's most talented generals. One Western observer noted he possessed a set of "large, black, and lustrous" eyes that sat on a broad-shouldered and muscular frame, built just like the American general George B McClellan. After meeting Osman during the Greco-Turkish War of 1897, American General Nelson A Miles proclaimed he had the same demeanour as General Ulysses S Grant, being a man of few words that snubbed pageantry. If one word described Osman's character, it was persevering. Osman lived by this dictum that brought him success on the battlefield: 'Persistence is the great secret of success in war. If an army is not successful one day, tenacity of purpose and persistency will in the end bring victory.'

Stationed with a small army in western Bulgaria at the village of Widin (modern Vidin), Osman grew anxious when word reached him of the Russian passage of the Danube. His flank exposed and position untenable, Osman, in a bold manoeuvre, moved his 11,000 men and 54 guns to counter the

Osman sported a federal blue jacket with no rank or insignia at Plevna – the Turkish version of General Grant

"PERSISTENCY IS THE GREAT SECRET OF SUCCESS IN WAR. IF AN ARMY IS NOT SUCCESSFUL ONE DAY, TENACITY OF PURPOSE AND PERSISTENCY WILL IN THE END BRING VICTORY"

Russian columns advancing south. After a six-day forced march tallying over 160 kilometres down filthy roads, with the sun beating down on their faces, the exhausted Ottoman soldiers dragged themselves into the village of Plevna (modern Pleven) on 19 July 1877. Plevna proved to be a tactically significant location because it formed a junction of six major routes, like the part Gettysburg played during the American Civil War. Not giving his weary men a moment of respite, Osman ordered them to immediately begin digging a network of trenches and cutting loopholes in some of the village's buildings in order prepare for an imminent Russian assault.

The next day, a single Russian division appeared on the outskirts of the Ottoman entrenchments with orders to scatter Osman's defenders. The commander of the division, General Yuri Schilder-Schuldner, demonstrated his ineptitude when he impudently launched a head-on assault with two separate columns without bothering to make a thorough reconnaissance on Osman's well-entrenched position.

Outnumbered and facing Osman's men armed with superior firearms, Schilder-Schuldner's division, made up of 8,600 men and 46 pieces of field artillery, was demolished after suffering a loss of 3,000 men. Osman only suffered the loss of 50 men. Schilder-Schuldner licked his wounds and awaited the arrival of reinforcements.

Fresh from his effortless

capture of the Ottoman fortress of Nikopol on 16 July 1877, General Krüdener arrived with the remainder of his IX Corps to support Schilder-Schuldner's broken division. Bringing the combined Russian strength outside the village to 35,000 men and 176 guns, General Krüdener oozed confidence, assured his veterans would easily drive out Osman and his men with the cold steel of their bayonets.

The bayonet became the pillar of Russian strategy following the Crimean War, as an alternative to adopting the world's modern firearms and implementing up-to-date tactics. A significant portion of Osman's men carried a simpler version of the British Martini-Henry, the Peabody-Martini, a fast-loading and fast-firing breech-loading rifle that could hit a target at a distance of 1.6 kilometres (Osman employed at least 8,000 during the siege) and outdistance any standard Russian rifles (Berdan, Krnka, and Karle) by hundreds of metres, decimating tightly packed Russian bayonet-driven columns.

The second Russian assault on Plevna commenced on the morning of 30 July 1877, with the landscape draped in a thick fog. Badly needed Ottoman reinforcements had arrived through the mountains from Sofia, bringing Osman's total force to 22,000 men and 58 guns. Despite inflicting 2,000 casualties on the Ottomans, the Russians suffered a staggering 7,300 casualties and made no considerable progress in the second botched assault on Plevna. The firepower from the Peabody-Martini rifles, complemented with American Winchester lever-action rifles, cut the Russian columns to shreds. Osman had beat back two Russian assaults, inflicting over 10,000 casualties and demoralising the Russian forces.

The successful defence of Plevna provided several major complications for the Russians. Foremost, it threatened Russian supply lines and their line of communication shooting back for many miles through Romania and into the mainland of Russia. Secondly, by holding Plevna, Osman provided a major obstacle to the Russian offensive, and began to absorb thousands of Russian soldiers to extinguish the Ottoman opposition. Thirdly, it jeopardised the success of the Russian offensive thus far, threatening the flanks of Russian forces at Shipka Pass and near Rushchuk, putting any further progress toward

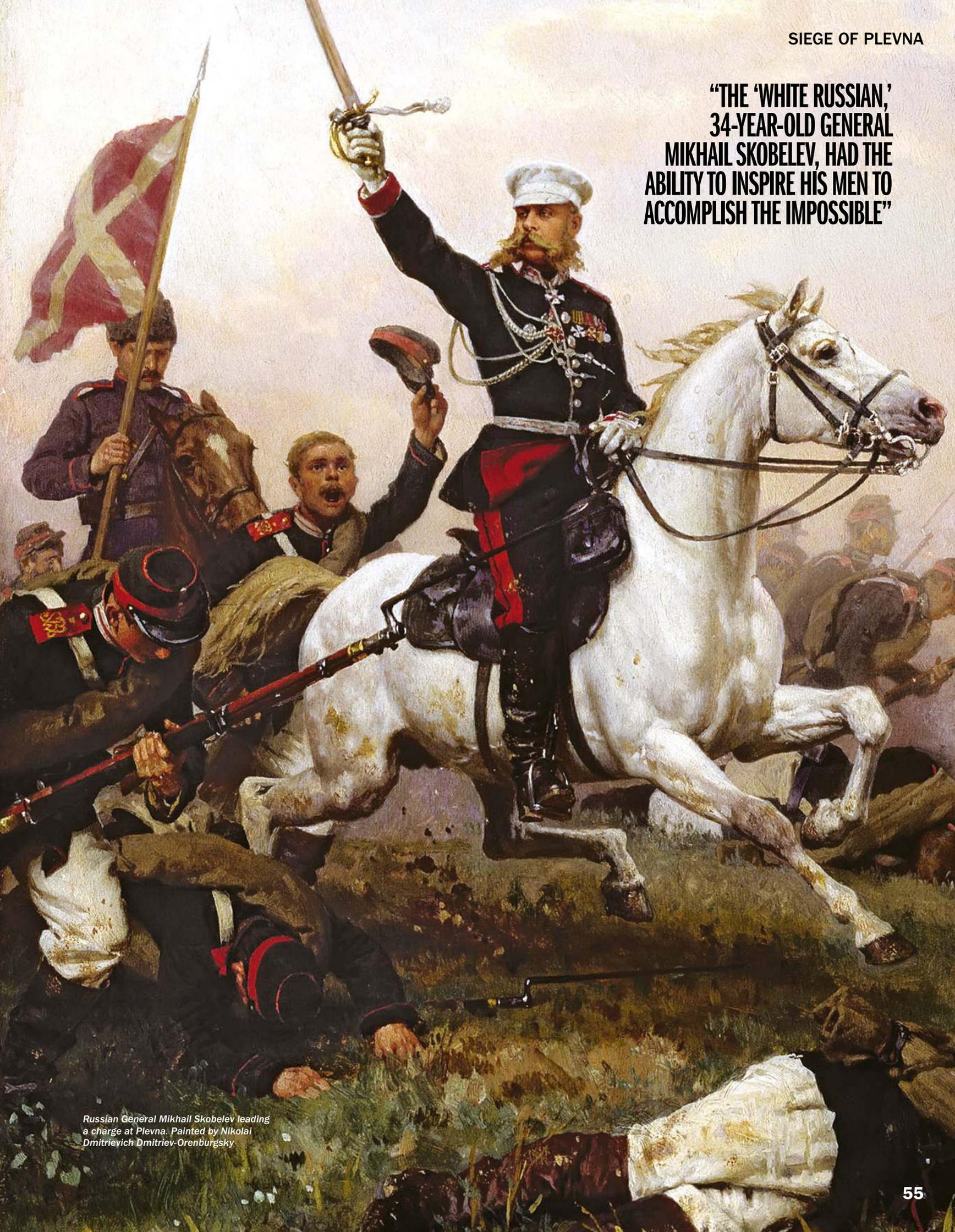
Constantinople on standstill.

Lastly, a delay in capturing Plevna could also be disastrous, the Russians wanting to bring the war to a quick conclusion for financial, military, (before the harsh Bulgarian winter set it), and political reasons (fearful of British intervention).

Not only providing a



**“THE ‘WHITE RUSSIAN,’
34-YEAR-OLD GENERAL
MIKHAIL SKOBELEV, HAD THE
ABILITY TO INSPIRE HIS MEN TO
ACCOMPLISH THE IMPOSSIBLE”**



Russian General Mikhail Skobelev leading a charge at Plevna. Painted by Nikolai Dmitrievich Dmitriev-Orenburgsky

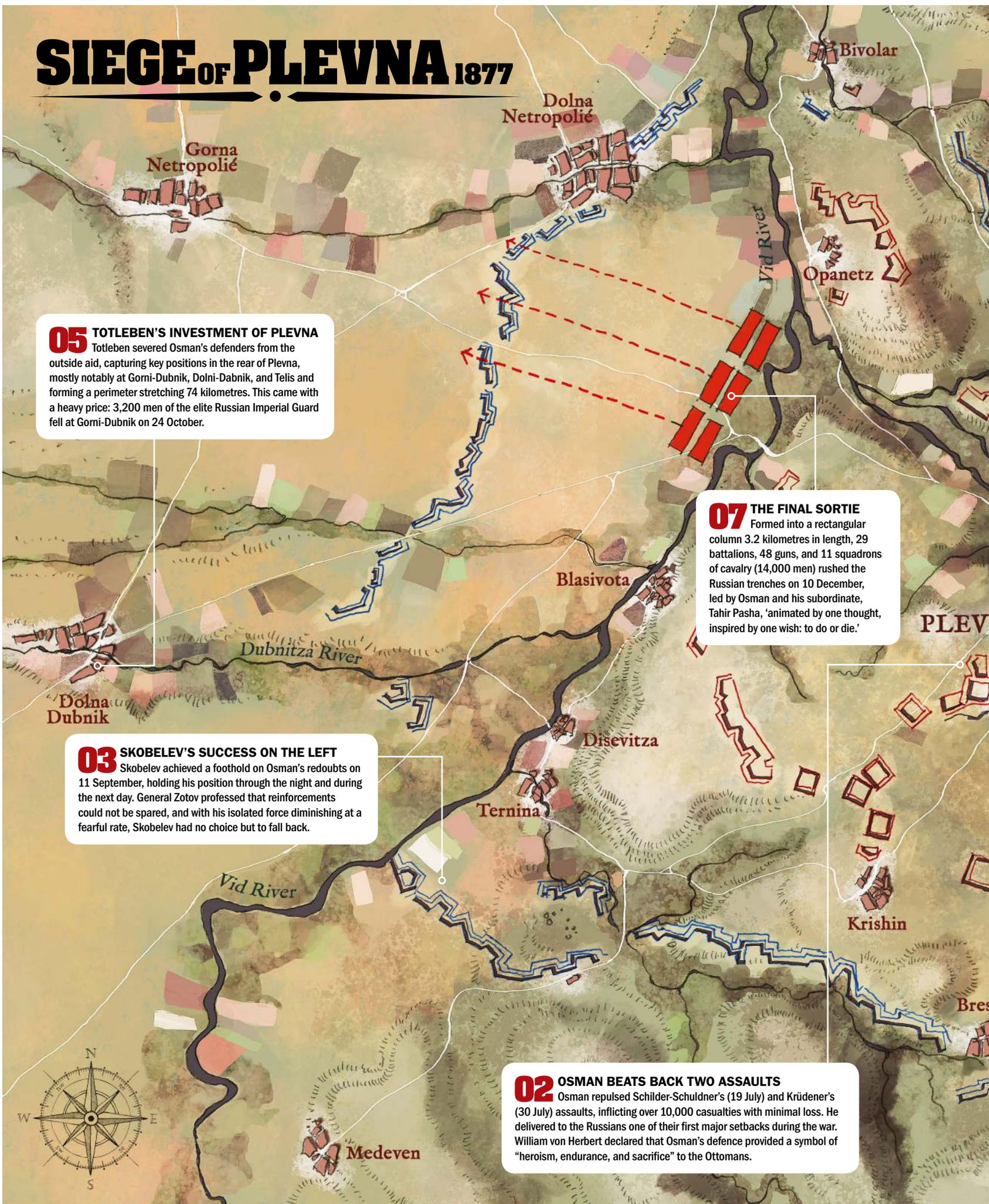
SIEGE OF PLEVNA 1877

05 TOTLEBEN'S INVESTMENT OF PLEVNA
 Totleben severed Osman's defenders from the outside aid, capturing key positions in the rear of Plevna, mostly notably at Gomi-Dubnik, Dolni-Dabnik, and Telis and forming a perimeter stretching 74 kilometres. This came with a heavy price: 3,200 men of the elite Russian Imperial Guard fell at Gomi-Dubnik on 24 October.

07 THE FINAL SORTIE
 Formed into a rectangular column 3.2 kilometres in length, 29 battalions, 48 guns, and 11 squadrons of cavalry (14,000 men) rushed the Russian trenches on 10 December, led by Osman and his subordinate, Tahir Pasha, 'animated by one thought, inspired by one wish: to do or die.'

03 SKOBELEV'S SUCCESS ON THE LEFT
 Skobelev achieved a foothold on Osman's redoubts on 11 September, holding his position through the night and during the next day. General Zotov professed that reinforcements could not be spared, and with his isolated force diminishing at a fearful rate, Skobelev had no choice but to fall back.

02 OSMAN BEATS BACK TWO ASSAULTS
 Osman repulsed Schilder-Schuldner's (19 July) and Krüdener's (30 July) assaults, inflicting over 10,000 casualties with minimal loss. He delivered to the Russians one of their first major setbacks during the war. William von Herbert declared that Osman's defence provided a symbol of "heroism, endurance, and sacrifice" to the Ottomans.



Map: Rocío Espin

01 SIGNIFICANCE OF PLEVNA

Roughly 17,000 civilians lived inside the Bulgarian village of Plevna in 1877. Six major routes intersected through the village. Surrounded by a network of hills to the south and west, the region was also shielded by vineyards, gardens and orchards, providing a prime location to wage a defensive battle.

04 FALL OF GRIVITZA NO 1

During the third assault of Plevna, Russian and Romanian soldiers captured Grivitzka No 1 after a bloody struggle. Initially regarded as a major triumph, the Russians soon discovered that the real strength of the position was in the stronger and more heavily defended Grivitzka No 2, still in Ottoman hands.

08 OSMAN IS WOUNDED AND SURRENDERS

Osman was carried to a shed after being wounded where he formally surrendered. The next day, Osman was invited to a luncheon with Alexander II, carried by a servant and a Cossack, where he was met with the cries of "Bravo, Osman!" by over 200 awaiting Russian staff officers.

06 PLEVNA'S UNAVOIDABLE FALL

The halt of Mehmed Ali's relief army ended any hope of Plevna's salvation. Valentine Baker complained of the apathetic way in which Osman's army seemed likely to be left to perish by senior Ottoman leaders. Baker would help delay the Russians after Plevna's fall at the Battle of Tashkessen.

-  Russian/Romanian trenches
-  Turkish trenches
-  Turkish army

strategic hindrance to the Russians, the defence of Plevna embodied a religious and ideological struggle. The Russians viewed the war as a crusade to liberate their fellow Christian Slavs living in Ottoman territory, and any success by the Muslim empire endangered the notion of Christian providence. When Tsar Alexander II arrived at Plevna in person, the contest to capture the village developed into a matter of national pride, and any setbacks provided an international embarrassment to the Russian monarchy. Both sides were willing to spill as much blood as necessary to win out at Plevna, and it would be a test of endurance to see who would buckle first.

Thousands of Russian and Romanian soldiers began to arrive and form a semicircle around Osman's defences in August and September, including the 59-year-old Tsar Alexander II and his cumbersome royal caravan. The liberal-minded emperor made significant strides upon assuming the throne in 1855, abolishing serfdom and attempting to reform his army in the aftermath of the Russian defeat during the Crimean War. Even though his brother, the incompetent 46-year-old Grand Duke Nicholas, was the de facto commander-in-chief of the Russian forces in Bulgaria, Alexander II shadowed the advancing army, imitating the legendary Peter the Great. Known for his fierce temper and stubbornness, Alexander II tended to cast an eye over decisions made in the field – to the displeasure of Nicholas. He could be a chivalrous and a bold leader, but the monarch was no Peter.

Plevna soon became the focal point in the war as Osman continued to improve his defences in anticipation of the next assault. Western correspondents accompanying both armies wired home news of the monumental struggle surrounding the village. Newspapers circulated headlines praising the heroic defence and the Russian setbacks. Plevna and its defenders gained the sympathy of the British public who honoured the underdog Ottomans by naming pets, streets, buildings, and even a lavatory pan, after Osman or the village of Plevna. Even the daring Captain Fred Burnaby showed up in Bulgaria and proposed rushing through the Russian lines to join the Ottoman defenders in their spirited last stand.

Only two major Ottoman armies were in the vicinity that could provide viable support to Osman and the Plevna defenders. The German-born Mehmed Ali Pasha's army operating along the Lom river to the east, and Süleyman Pasha's army working to capture the Shipka Pass from the Russians to the south. Unfortunately, both officers passionately hated each other and failed to coordinate their efforts. Mehmed Ali had some minor successes against the Russian army under the Tsar's son, but grew timid, abandoning his offensive. Süleyman bluntly hurled his men against the Russians dug in on the mountaintops at the Shipka Pass with no success, losing thousands of veterans. For the time being, Osman would have to hold out as long as he could on his own.

The third Russian assault on Plevna commenced on 11 September 1877, a very special day to Tsar Alexander II – the anniversary of his baptism. A wooden platform was constructed for him to view what he

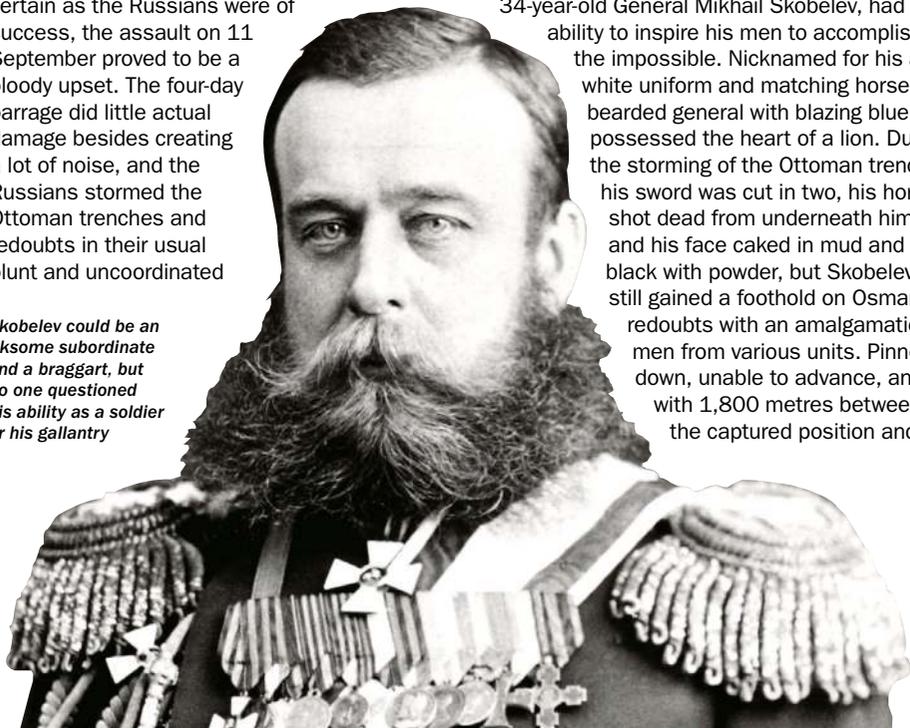
Wounded Russian soldiers after one of the assaults on Plevna. Painted by Vasily Vereshchagin



anticipated would be the final capture of the city, with a fine cloth stretched over a table arranged with treats and vodka, providing something for him and his staff to pick at while the action took place. For four days, beginning 7 September, a significant portion of the 424 Russian guns pounded the Ottoman defences with 30,000 shells prior to the general assault. The English outcast and mercenary, Valentine Baker, quickly developing into a fabled character in the Ottoman ranks, could hear the guns over 160 kilometres away while serving with Mehmed Ali's army.

The Russians planned to overwhelm the Ottoman defences with a total of 84,000 soldiers in a three-pronged assault, focusing on the Grivitza (right), Radischevo (centre), and Krischin (left) redoubts. Even as certain as the Russians were of success, the assault on 11 September proved to be a bloody upset. The four-day barrage did little actual damage besides creating a lot of noise, and the Russians stormed the Ottoman trenches and redoubts in their usual blunt and uncoordinated

Skobelev could be an irksome subordinate and a braggart, but no one questioned his ability as a soldier or his gallantry



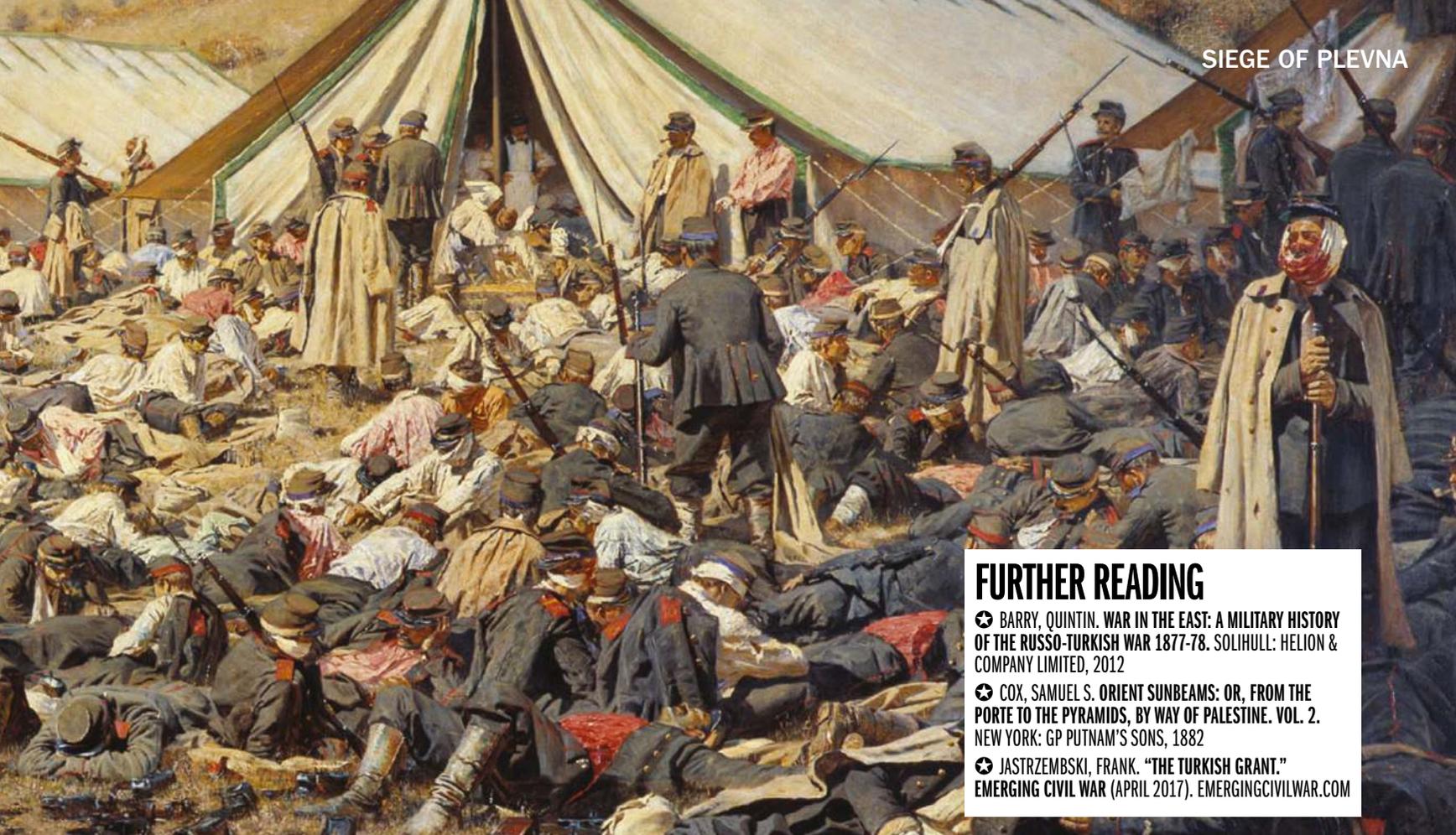
fashion. The rain, as if anticipating the bloody carnage, began on 10 September and continued until 12 September, turning the landscape into a soupy quagmire. The attack on the right at the Grivitza redoubts, largely made up of the Romanians – who entered the fray with bravery and a contempt of death akin to the Americans during their first exposure to action at the Battles of Cantigny and Belleau Wood during World War I – only managed to wrestle Grivitza No 1 from the Ottomans after suffering fearful casualties, while the assault on the centre at the Radischevo redoubts utterly failed.

Despite the setbacks on the centre and right, one Russian general and his division managed to penetrate the Ottoman fortifications through sheer determination in the direction of the Krischin redoubts. The 'White Russian,' 34-year-old General Mikhail Skobelev, had the ability to inspire his men to accomplish the impossible. Nicknamed for his all-white uniform and matching horse, the bearded general with blazing blue eyes possessed the heart of a lion. During the storming of the Ottoman trenches, his sword was cut in two, his horse shot dead from underneath him, and his face caked in mud and black with powder, but Skobelev still gained a foothold on Osman's redoubts with an amalgamation of men from various units. Pinned down, unable to advance, and with 1,800 metres between the captured position and the

Russian artillery to the rear, Skobelev pleaded for reinforcements from his corps commander, Lieutenant General PD Zotov.

The Russians fixed in the captured position with Skobelev used bayonets, side arms, camp-kettle lids, and bare hands to dig an extension of trenches to protect their exposed flank facing the other Ottoman redoubts. Determined to drive off Skobelev, Osman took advantage of the Russian inactivity on the right and centre and reinforced this front with men from other sectors. Skobelev's men beat off repeated Ottoman counterattacks leading into the night, but reinforcements never came. Skobelev received a hand-delivered note from Zotov ordering him to fall back if his position could not be held with what force he had. Frustrated at the loss of an opportunity and the useless waste of life, Skobelev reluctantly abdicated his foothold and fell back the next day.

A total of 15,000 Russians and Romanians fell on the third assault of Plevna, more than the two previous assaults combined. At this rate of death, the Russian army would be obliterated, so a council of war of the senior Russian generals was held and a unanimous decision made to adopt a new method to capture the stronghold. The hero of the defence of Sevastopol during the Crimean War, General Eduard Totleben, was called from his retirement in St Petersburg to oversee the siege of Plevna. The retired American General George B McClellan, a Russophile who had observed Totleben's work during the Crimean War, noted in a period article that when Totleben took control of the operations around Plevna, "knowledge and skill directed the operations of the Russians" from that point forward, and that, "Osman became helpless as a child in their hands." Totleben redirected the Russian operations by dedicating



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his efforts to cutting off Osman and his men from support by moving Russian cavalry units to block the main roads in his rear and by capturing key positions in the same area, halting inbound provisions, resources, and reinforcements.

By mid-November, Osman's roughly 50,000 defenders were cut off by at least double the amount of Russian and Romanian soldiers, complemented by hundreds of well-positioned guns. On average, a skirmish or clash was taking place every five days and Osman could no longer replenish his losses on the front line. Disease began to spread, leading to homes, stables and sheds being turned into makeshift hospitals loaded with the sick, wounded, and dying, transforming the village into a 'savage abomination.' Food became scarce, and in the most extreme cases, cats, dogs, vermin, or the entrails of rotting animals were consumed. On 13 November, Grand Duke Nicholas sent a flag of truce to Osman asking for his surrender, but Osman politely turned the offer.

Meanwhile, an Ottoman relief army was thrown together, placed under the command of Mehmed Ali, fresh from his defeat on the Lom. It had orders from Abdülhamid II to assemble at Sofia in the west and move through the Arabakonak mountain pass, falling on the rear of the Russian besiegers surrounding Plevna. Made up of some second and third tier Ottoman soldiers, Mehmed Ali's army of 20,000 was quickly halted by a Russian force of 30,000 detached from the siege in order to block his advance.

With no conceivable support coming, Osman had no other choice than to surrender or attempt to break out by December. He chose to go down with a fight. He concentrated a significant portion of his remaining manpower to the rear of his defences, hoping to

"SUCH A BOILING AND SEETHING MASS OF MAD HUMANITY CANNOT BE IMAGINED, MUCH LESS DESCRIBED"

overwhelm and blow a hole in the weaker Russian line and escape down the road to Sofia. William von Herbert, a European serving as an officer in Osman's army, recorded that by 10 December the "thriving and pretty Plevna of July" was now a "Desolate, dead, God-forsaken" wasteland. That night, the tired, malnourished, and exhausted Ottoman soldiers selected for the task sat bunched together next to illuminating campfires and under a light snowfall, their thoughts drifting to their last-ditch effort to escape Plevna alive.

The next morning, a massed column of Ottoman soldiers arrayed shoulder to shoulder appeared, and with Osman in the lead, they rushed the Russian entrenchments roughly 2.7 kilometres ahead. In a 'grand and solemn monotone,' thousands of voices chanted Bismillah-ir-Rahmân-ir-Raheem ('In the name of Allah, the most Compassionate, the most Merciful') as Russian rifle fire and artillery shells tore lanes through their tightly packed ranks. The Ottoman soldiers kept driving forward through the deafening cannonade and the thick smoke, gung-ho to puncture a hole in the Russian line. Both sides hacked, clubbed, and stabbed at each other and discharged their weapons at point-blank range, Herbert solemnly recalling that, "such a boiling and seething mass of mad humanity cannot be imagined, much less described."

Totleben had prepared for this sort of last desperate effort. Overrunning portions of the first line of entrenchments, the sortie stalled when met by stiff resistance. Well-directed Russian artillery fire and fresh reinforcements pinned down Osman's men, while Russian counterattacks from the other sectors overwhelmed the other diminished Ottoman sectors. Even more devastating, Osman went down wounded, pierced in the calf, leading to a rumour among his men that he had been killed, destroying what morale remained.

With no other choice, Osman surrendered. After 143 days, the siege finally fell on the morning of 10 December 1877. The Ottomans lost nearly 6,000 in the attempted breakout to the 1,300 Russian casualties. The remaining malnourished and sick Ottoman soldiers who had fought so hard for their sultan were marched off to be imprisoned in Russia – only 15,000 of their number would survive the death march as crows, ravens, and vultures hovered above and picked at the tattered and vanishing column. A day after the surrender, Osman was presented to Alexander II as a hero before being marched off as a captive to Russia.

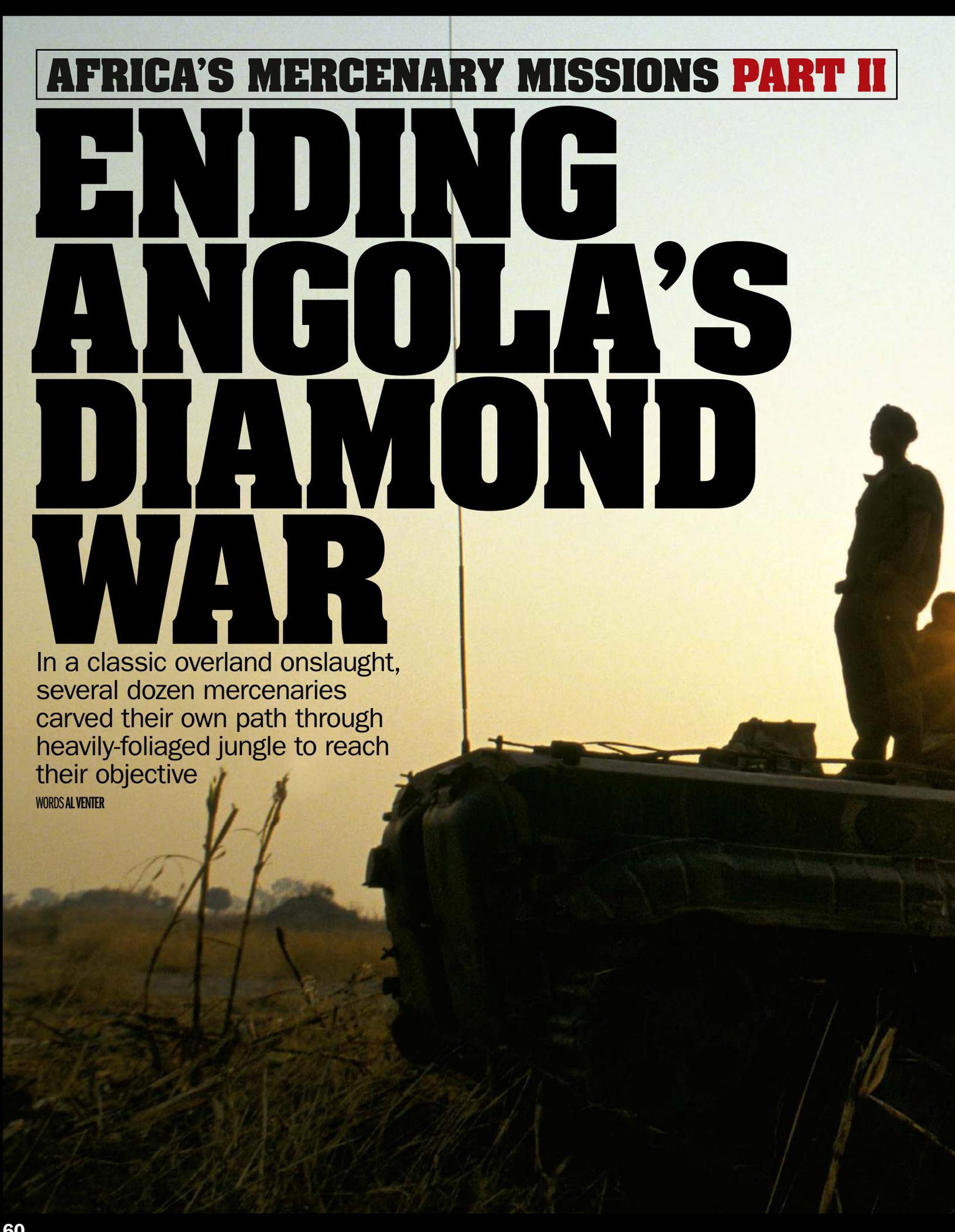
From that point, Ottoman resistance virtually melted away in the subsequent months of the war. Word travelled rapidly of the surrender, and it crushed what spirit still lingered in the remaining Ottoman armies. Over 100,000 Russian and Romanian soldiers were freed from the siege and able to renew their offensive towards Constantinople, conducting a bold winter campaign in a two-pronged manoeuvre through the Balkan Mountains, crushing resistance in Bulgaria. With the Russians on the outskirts of their capital, the Ottomans sued for a humiliating peace, the Treaty of San Stefano officially ending the war in March 1878.

AFRICA'S MERCENARY MISSIONS PART II

ENDING ANGOLA'S DIAMOND WAR

In a classic overland onslaught, several dozen mercenaries carved their own path through heavily-foliaged jungle to reach their objective

WORDS BY AL VENTER



The battle for Cafunfo lasted weeks, though if you include the planning stages and movement of assets needed for such a foray, it actually took months. It is recognised today as one of the most significant 'small war' campaigns in recent years. The process involved a mechanised strike force of about 100 vehicles. It included dozens of Soviet-era BMP-2 amphibious fighting vehicles and by the time it was over, the attacking force – Combat Group Bravo – had covered hundreds of kilometres in a distant corner of Africa that few of us had heard about, never mind visited.

The attackers came under constant fire – sometimes four or five times a day – from a driven adversary, many of whom were not afraid to die for a real or imagined cause.

Short, sharp and brutal, these skirmishes were fundamental to the kind of unconventional onslaughts launched by both sides, the finer points of which are rarely taught in such august establishments as West Point, Sandhurst or France's elite École Spéciale Militaire de Saint-Cyr.

The reason for the attack was fundamental: without roughly \$200 million delivered annually by the Cafunfo alluvial diamond diggings, the rebel leader Jonas Savimbi would be deprived of a hefty proportion of the funding needed to fight his war. In contrast, the Luanda government was coining billions from oil, supplemented by the comparative 'small change' from diamonds.

In reality, the mechanised assault in Angola's remote Lunda Norte Province in July 1994 should never have happened. The target lay at the far end

of a virtually nonexistent road in the middle of nowhere. Throughout, while moving towards its objective, the strike force was vulnerable in a region that had little defensive cover and almost no prospect for back-up should things go wrong.

Air cover from several Mi-17s operating out of Saurimo was sporadic. The city lies 300 kilometres east of Cafunfo, or roughly three hours flying time there and back – and almost the entire area in-between was hostile. Should one of the helicopters be forced down, it would have been difficult for help to arrive in time.

That did happen, several times in fact, but the saving grace was that South African mercenary aviators always insisted on 'two-ship' operations. If one helicopter went down, the other would land and rescue passengers and crew.

In one such incident, where an Mi-17 Hip was forced down by ground fire, the second helicopter landed (in a swamp) and loaded everybody on board. It was a remarkable achievement since the instruction manual of the older version of that helicopter suggests a maximum load of 20 troops. By the time everybody had clambered on board and was ready to head 'home', that tally had upped to 40.

For all that, South African pilots operating under Angolan Government auspices did what was expected of them and were able to provide several hours of top cover when weather allowed, and sometimes when it did not. It hardly helped that the UNITA rebels had acquired SAMs (surface to air missiles), and these were deployed several times against the



Above: Swiss-educated Dr Jonas Savimbi is regarded as one of Africa's most successful guerrilla leaders. He was eventually betrayed and killed in February 2002

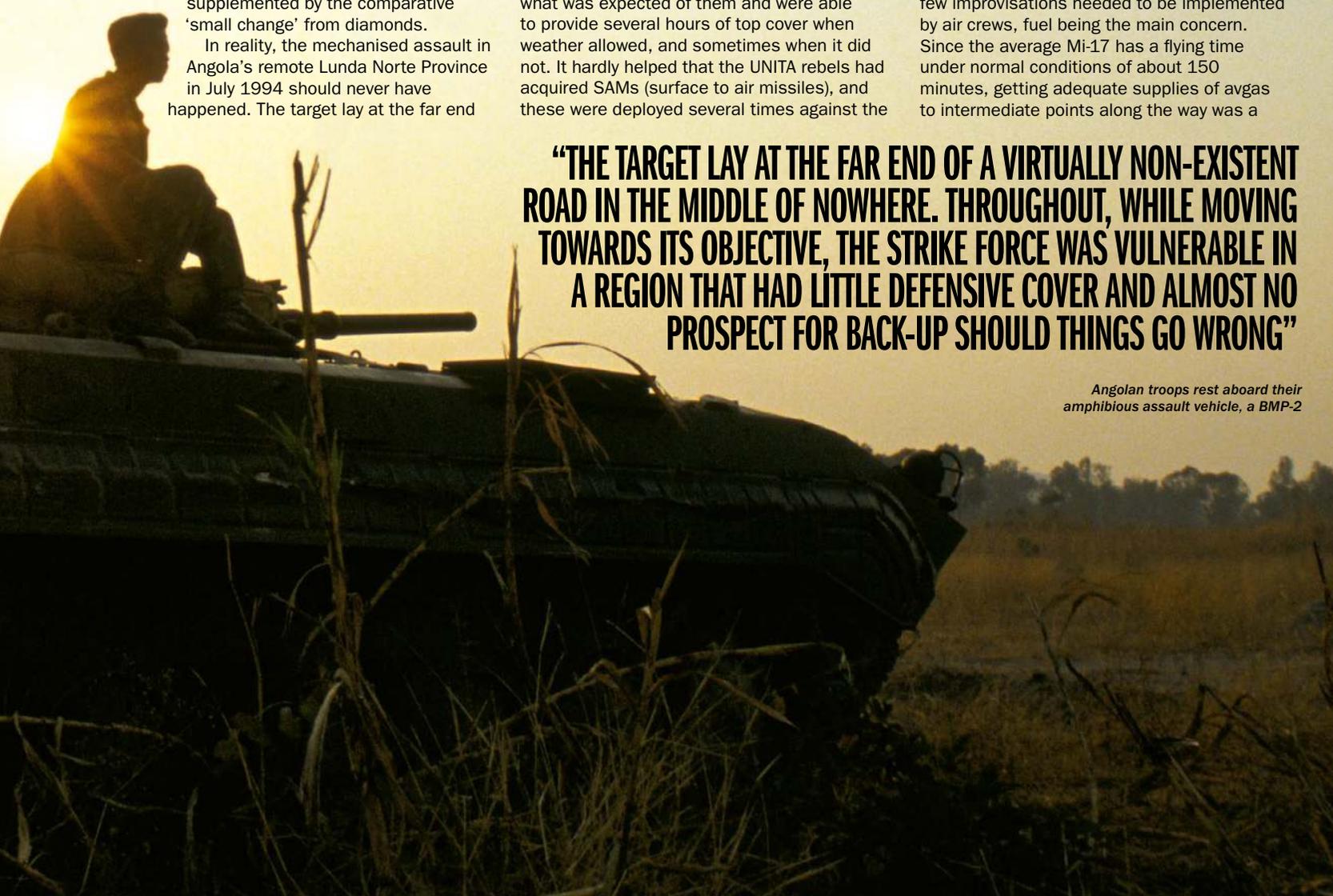
Hips: mostly Stinger missiles provided some years earlier by the CIA for use against pro-Soviet government forces.

Having given this sophisticated equipment to Savimbi to fight his war against the Marxist Luanda government – quite a few Angolan Air Force jets and helicopters were downed – there was no way Washington could take them back after Soviet influence in Africa had waned.

What quickly became essential was that a few improvisations needed to be implemented by air crews, fuel being the main concern. Since the average Mi-17 has a flying time under normal conditions of about 150 minutes, getting adequate supplies of avgas to intermediate points along the way was a

“THE TARGET LAY AT THE FAR END OF A VIRTUALLY NON-EXISTENT ROAD IN THE MIDDLE OF NOWHERE. THROUGHOUT, WHILE MOVING TOWARDS ITS OBJECTIVE, THE STRIKE FORCE WAS VULNERABLE IN A REGION THAT HAD LITTLE DEFENSIVE COVER AND ALMOST NO PROSPECT FOR BACK-UP SHOULD THINGS GO WRONG”

Angolan troops rest aboard their amphibious assault vehicle, a BMP-2





Chopper pilot's view of one of the alluvial diamond fields in Angola's north-east



Africa's tropical thunderstorms are often as dangerous as enemy fire

Left: Mercenary on one of the Angolan Army's BMP-2s guarding Saurimo airport in the east of the country



Right: Mercenary helicopter pilot Carl Alberts (left) with his Angolan loadmaster and Colonel Hennie Blaauw

priority, though the mobile column heading towards Cafunfo did provide some fuel, carried on trucks in the two-kilometre-long convoy.

Additionally, a refuelling point was established at a small town that had been militarily secured on the main east-west road that snaked through the triple-tiered jungle region south of Cafunfo. There were many ancillary problems linked to the onslaught. To avoid landmines and ambushes, the column had to cut or plough its own route across some extremely difficult terrain.

There were several rivers, Savimbi having blown the bridges over most of them as soon as he realised in which direction the column was heading. This the South African commanders did with great difficulty even though their column included several Soviet armoured vehicle-launched bridges (AVLBs). Like much else in this improvised strike force, just about everything in the column moving towards the ultimate objective was 'make-do'.

In the end, having fought the rebels off more times than anybody could recall, the mercenary-led attack group – headed by former Reconnaissance Regiment commander Colonel Hennie Blaauw – managed to reach the diggings, though it took twice as long as they initially expected.

Once in Cafunfo and the enemy dislodged, more Angolan Army troops were airlifted into the area and the combined force set about holding the guerrillas at bay. Savimbi, we now know, was aware that he had lost the

battle, but still felt his irregulars – with a solid understanding of their own backyard in the jungle – could still win the war.

Blaauw was then faced with the difficult process of holding on to his gains, which, even with helicopter gunship support, was always going to be tenuous. Nobody could tell whether the UNITA leader had sent for reinforcement and if another 10,000 guerrillas would suddenly descend on the occupiers. Also, since the region was so incredibly remote, re-supply was a constant problem.

Though the attack force was eventually joined by a second large force of government troops – brought in overland and who set about consolidating the defences of the Forças Armadas Angolanas (FAA, the successors to FAPLA) – the process remained fragile. Ambushes, landmines and booby traps were a constant hazard in large part because the rebel force had originally been trained by the South African Army.

Welcome to the jungle

The battle for Cafunfo was to become a classic example of contemporary insurgency bush warfare in Africa. Indeed, with Angola's armour as well as ground and air assets preparing for battle, Cafunfo became something of a magic word.

Nobody had any doubt that the rebels would eventually be dislodged: especially since a new crowd of toughies on the block would be involved. Luanda was confident that, as with Soyo, the recently hired mercenaries would do the trick.

“LIKE MUCH ELSE IN THIS IMPROVISED STRIKE FORCE, JUST ABOUT EVERYTHING IN THE COLUMN MOVING TOWARDS THE ULTIMATE OBJECTIVE WAS ‘MAKE-DO’”

An old hand in counter-insurgency operations – though what took place at Cafunfo sometimes verged on the conventional – Colonel Blaauw accepted from the start that the task was daunting. There were innumerable delays, false starts and cancellations, coupled to some Angolan commanders playing mind games in their bids to either enhance their influence or start their own not-so-little diamond-buying cartels. Much of this obfuscation could be sourced to Luanda's mind-blowing bureaucracy.

At one stage, after Cafunfo had been overrun, a group of political commissars arrived at Saurimo. Like a gaggle of Auschwitz oberleutnants, they jackbooted about the base and demanded to know about things that were of little concern to them and had absolutely nothing at all to do with the campaign. A quick radio call to Luanda got them all back on their plane.

During preparatory stages, there were endless messages, contradictions, debates, not a few heated arguments about who was in charge of what, as well as questions that sometimes made little sense. Forms had to be completed (sometimes in quintuplicate), much of it linked to order groups or staff meetings, though Blaauw believed that little of what he reported was ever read in Luanda because Africa does not operate that way: there was confusion and obfuscation galore.

Kafka would have loved the place, especially since most of the senior Angolan commanders had been put through their paces in the Soviet Union. They tended to do things by the book. The South Africans did not, which was why these former Special Forces operators were hired to fight Angola's civil war in the first place: they were totally unconventional in their approach to combat.

To cap it, the mercenaries hired by Executive Outcomes had to contend with government staff



Savimbi's guerrillas ended up destroying most of the bridges in the country, though his men made few inroads in the country's cities



GEAR ON THE GROUND

ALMOST ALL THE WEAPONS DEPLOYED IN ANGOLA'S CIVIL WAR WERE EITHER SOVIET OR COMMUNIST CHINESE

Moscow made a lot of money selling their BMP-2 amphibious infantry fighting vehicles to quite a few Third World countries. Both Angola and Sierra Leone acquired this fairly versatile machine that first appeared with Iron Curtain armies in the 1980s.

It was a useful acquisition because it is relatively easy to control but its low profile could not have fared well in thick African bush, let alone jungle. A singular disadvantage is its rather cramped interior and the ability to transport only seven troops. But is certainly a marked improvement on the BRDM and BTR, also Soviet manufactured but dating from a few decades before.

The BMP-2 was designed with Moscow's Afghan war in mind and became the primary infantry fighting vehicle in many Third World countries

For all that, Moscow has always focussed on the BMP-2 being a low, agile, reliable and serviceable vehicle with adequate engine power 'for most all-terrain missions'. Also, it was the cheapest option when compared the Western fighting vehicles.

There are few known conflicts where the BMP-2 proved superior to anything else in the field; in fact it is not clear that the Angolan Army – without

Cuban or South African mercenary assistance – would have known how to employ tracked armour all that well in any case.

During the Border War, the author twice came upon BMP-2s along South Angola's Kunene River that were partially submerged. They were in perfect condition but their crews had forgotten to close the cocks on board when fording.

“A LOW, AGILE, RELIABLE AND SERVICEABLE VEHICLE WITH ADEQUATE ENGINE POWER ‘FOR MOST ALL-TERRAIN MISSIONS’”



officers who were sometimes political appointees with no military experience. There were quite a few instances where petty jealousies became squabbles, equipment arrived from abroad that didn't work, and spare parts that would disappear within an hour of arrival or simply didn't fit because they weren't the ones that had been ordered. Not to mention an army that seemed permanently drunk or, more often than not, was smoking something noxious.

The 'kick-off' point for the Cafunfo campaign was Saurimo, capital of Angola's eastern diamond region. Luanda had bought scores of new BMP-2 infantry fighting vehicles from Russia and many were either ferried east by Antonov transporters or driven overland, which proved problematic because Savimbi held most of Angola's rural areas and ambushes were commonplace.

From Cafunfo, Blaauw headed west for Firiquichi, a small town from where the column turned sharp north and struck out overland through the jungle. He and those who went in with him weren't to know until afterwards, but just about everything that eventually took place in a succession of battles, hinged on that tiny anonymous cluster of mud and grass huts perched on the banks of a river called Firiquichi. Until then, nobody had heard of the place.

When the armoured column eventually did transmogrify itself into a potent fighting force, it was comprised of about a dozen different types of vehicles. Apart from the 28 BMP-2s, there

“WHEN EFFECTIVELY DEPLOYED AGAINST ARMOURED VEHICLES, THE REBELS CAUSED MANY PROBLEMS AND THE FLY BOYS WERE CONSTANTLY ON CALL TO TAKE THEM OUT”

were an additional 60 logistic and fire-support vehicles, water and petrol bowzers, ammunition trucks, troop carriers and a couple of Russian bridge-building TMMs.

In terms of manpower, there were about 500 Angolan troops, the majority being trained at Wynand du Toit's Rio Longa base. They, in turn, were supported by a bunch of Executive Outcomes mercenaries.

The armoured thrust on Cafunfo was tough going. Blaauw commented afterwards that it was more difficult than anything he had experienced before; “worse than Soyo, because there we battled from static positions while on the road to Cafunfo we were constantly on the move.” He added that there was no way of predicting events: “We could only guess what UNITA might pull out of the hat.”

The first real effort involved night-flying activity by the Pilatus Porter PC-7, where merc pilot Louwrens Bosch – using his 68mm rocket pods – hit two UNITA trucks moving through thick bush, having targeted their lights. ‘Huge explosions’ was scribbled in the margin of his contact report back at base.

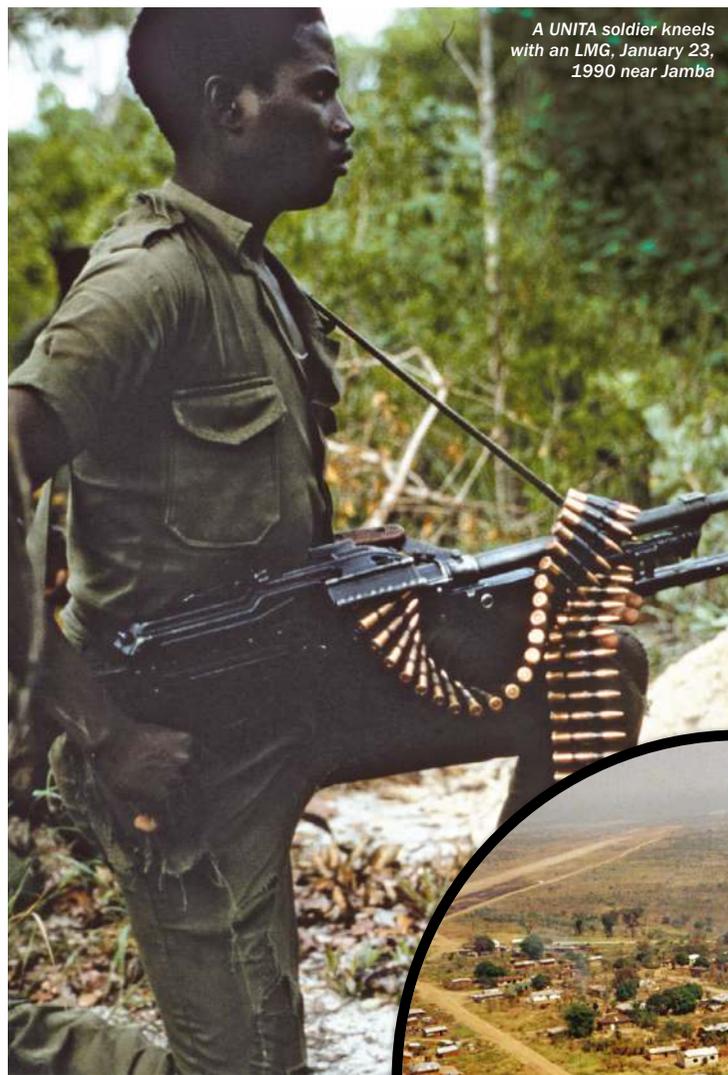
Also, the enemy used their ZU-23-2 double-barrelled weapons to good effect. An excellent weapon when effectively deployed against armoured vehicles, the rebels caused many problems and the fly boys were constantly on call to take them out. These ‘heavies’ were often used in conjunction with mortar fire.

In settling down for the night in traditional Afrikaner ‘laager formation’ Blaauw ordered his men to dig slit trenches at least two feet deep, though because of the intensity of incoming fire most of his combatants went down half as much again. In the column was what Blaauw regarded as his most valuable asset: a Caterpillar front-end loader.

At one stage it was almost discarded in a sloppy recovery operation that had been completely misdirected by his Angolan

Below: Though guerrillas soon crippled Angola's colonial railways, they made good use of what tracks remained

Below, inset: Aerial approach to Angola's diamond capital Saurimo, 500 miles east of the capital



A UNITA soldier kneels with an LMG, January 23, 1990 near Jamba



counterpart. On a whim, the officer decided that because the machine didn't work quite like he thought it should, it would have to go. He'd already given instructions for it to be blown up and it took a hefty argument from Blaauw to persuade the staff officer to desist.

As it subsequently turned out, it was just as well that orders were not obeyed. Several times the column ground to a halt, its vehicles paralysed because of obstacles, which were quickly removed by the Caterpillar.

Supply and demand

The question of adequately supplying Blaauw's 'Flying Column' was always a serious issue. Very literally, everything had to be flown to a mobile force that could never predict in advance where it would be at any specific time. For this reason, EO personnel spent long hours prior to the operation planning air drops with former Soviet pilots who were at the controls of a small fleet of Ilyushin-76s, all hired on contract for this military operation.

"We couldn't afford mistakes while we were out there," Blaauw added, "so we would

improvise as we went, usually working with our own support pilots when looking for a safe drop zone. They'd do an aerial recce for us and come back with suggestions about where it could take place.

"At the same time, the guys bringing the stuff to us had to be scrupulously familiar with our routines, essentially because we had to remain flexible. Everything that might be needed was listed... we'd prepared pages of detailed instructions, where everything was stored or from whom it could be ordered. Then followed complicated delivery arrangements, which also had to be co-ordinated and which could sometimes become a nightmare in a city like Luanda.

"With all these factors in mind, we established some good parameters for the drops and our new Russian friends were more than up to the task." Blaauw detailed what was involved at the delivery end:

"Supply drops were made from about 20,000 feet with between 16 and 20 drogue-stabilised pallets per flight. Each time about 20 tons of fuel, food, spare parts and medical needs

would freefall to about a thousand feet where KAP-3 systems would automatically open the chutes." Obviously, explained Blaauw, altitude had to be strictly maintained because of the threat of SAMs.

"At the end of it, things were very professionally handled. The Russkies dropped their cargoes spot-on and actually, for all the doubts some of the guys had about these people, they never missed a drop zone.

"They were a real pleasure to work with, very professional," said the former Recce colonel, speaking of his former enemies.

Though not in the same class as Western infantry fighting vehicles, the Russian BMP-2 proved invaluable throughout the campaign. This classic tracked troop carrier with its distinctive pointed nose and almost horizontal ribbed glacis plate has always performed well in Africa.

The Angolan version came with 30mm cannon, a coaxial 7.62mm machine gun and, commented one of the operators, "it's a pretty formidable weapon and only a direct hit with an armour-piercing RPG grenade or a heavy mortar can cause serious damage."

Also, on the Angolan terrain, being primitive and in places impassable for normal vehicles, its tracks were an advantage over wheels whose tires were vulnerable to bullets and mortar shell fragments. Its secret, said Blaauw, was that it needs almost no regular

"THOUGH NOT IN THE SAME CLASS AS WESTERN INFANTRY FIGHTING VEHICLES, THE RUSSIAN BMP-2 PROVED INVALUABLE THROUGHOUT THE CAMPAIGN"



Left, top: Some of the guerrillas were barely out of their teens, but they were good and committed fighters

Left, middle: After the war ended it was estimated that almost 40 different types of mines had been laid by the various adversaries. This is a selection of one batch cleared by a UN-sponsored team

Left, bottom: A US-supplied Stinger missile downed this Angolan Air Force MiG-21 jet



Innocents caught in the middle of a never-ending civil war. It was women and children who suffered the most

maintenance. "As long as it is regularly greased and its water and oil kept topped up, the BMP-2 will accomplish everything... expected of it".

Trouble was, only days out of base on this campaign, the engines of at least three BMP-2s seized because their Angolan operators didn't bother with routine maintenance, as they had been tasked to do before they pulled over the covers at night. They'd allowed their machines to run dry, with the result that they had to abandon them where they ground to a halt.

After that, Blaauw put the word out: "If your machine fails because you didn't maintain it, you stay behind with your crippled vehicle." The prospect of being picked off or taken captive by the rebels had the required effect.

As might have been expected, the last 30 or so kilometres heading north towards Cafunfo ended in a series of land battles that were both intense and, by African standards, classic. What had become clear to the attackers was that Savimbi was desperate. He threw at Combat Group Bravo all that remained of his reserves. As one of the EO officers recalled, "those bush fighters would sometimes come at us in waves, and quite often with an almost total disregard for their fate... they were as brave as hell."

He reckoned that some UNITA attacks were nothing short of suicidal because, "let's face it, guerrilla or not, men on the ground or in soft-

A Popular Liberation Movement of Angola soldier poses while guarding United Nations food convoys



"WE WOULD SHUT OUR HATCHES AND PLOUGH RIGHT THROUGH THEIR LINES, SOMETIMES RIGHT OVER THE TOP OF THEIR BUNKERS AND TRENCHES... THEY SUFFERED TERRIBLE LOSSES"

skinned vehicles are no match for armour... it was the same for us heading towards the diamond fields."

UNITA would attack wherever and whenever the opportunity presented itself, which underscored a determination that was not only fierce but dedicated. According to Blaauw, while these rebels did manage to cause damage, their efforts had very little effect on the BMPs which, built for Third World conditions by the former Soviets, could take an inordinate amount of punishment.

"We would shut our hatches and plough right through their lines, sometimes right over the top of their bunkers and trenches... they suffered terrible losses," he declared.

"We'd be travelling along in the bush in line-ahead and as soon as we heard that distinctive mortars 'plop...plop...plop', we'd close down everything and just go. Sometimes their aim was well off but even when they homed in on us, their 60mm shells had little effect. The BMPs were built to take that kind of hit and when it happened, the guys inside would be deaf for a week, their eardrums blown. But they were very much alive and still fighting." Were 81mm mortars used instead, he reckoned it would have been much more devastating.

It was during the final approach to Cafunfo that Hennie Blaauw had what was possibly the narrowest escape of his career as a fighting man. He recalled:

"I'd called the column to a halt fairly early one afternoon a couple of days out of Cafunfo. Because there had been harassment from UNITA after dark, some of it pretty concerted and involving mortars and encirclements, we'd arrange the BMPs so that their guns pointed outwards: if we had to retaliate, it would be pretty easy to do so.

"The jungle around us was thick and almost impenetrable in places and encroached right up to where we'd parked. Although UNITA tended to mortar us whenever we stopped, we weren't overly bothered because we'd all dug slit trenches.

"It wasn't quite light when I got up the next morning and did the usual rounds. If a man was asleep at his post, it was better that I should find him than his bosses. Angolan officers and NCOs would have no compunction about shooting a sleeping man where he lay. We only docked their pay."

The colonel asked his signaller-driver Paul Ditrich for a roll of toilet paper. He then did what he'd spent a lifetime in Special Forces telling others not to: he set off into the bush to relieve himself alone.

"I ambled off towards a clump of bushes. By then Ditrich was headed back towards the perimeter of our defences. Moments later, facing outwards from the column and having just undone my belt, I was watching something on my flank and not paying too much attention



Above: A ragged bunch of black and white mercenaries at their eastern base



A security guard at Angolan Air Force planes at Saurimo

Below: During South Africa's Border War huge quantities of Angolan hardware was captured in battle



Soviet anti-tank mine lifted by a clearing team after the war ended. Most of these bombs originated in the Soviet camp

“I WAS CAUGHT IN SEVERAL MINEFIELDS OVER THE YEARS AND THE EXPERIENCE CAN BEST BE DESCRIBED AS STUPEFYING. ONLY ONE THOUGHT GOES THROUGH YOUR MIND: HOW TO GET OUT OF THERE?”

DANGER: LANDMINES

AL VENTER PERSONALLY EXPERIENCED THE TERROR OF THESE VICIOUS DEVICES

Angola – before and after the Portuguese abandoned its African colonies – has always been landmine country. We know that from the visits Princess Diana made to some of its minefields – and there were hundreds, many of which have since been cleared.

After Lisbon's colonial war which ended in 1974, millions of anti-personnel and anti-tank were laid by all the adversaries and though records are sparse, there were believed to have been millions.

I was caught in several minefields over the years and the experience can best be described as stupefying. Only one thought goes through your mind: how to get out of there?

I was blown up only once by an anti-tank mine thought to be a Soviet TM-57 and because I was standing on the gun turret of an armoured vehicle, I broke an arm when I was hurled some distance by the blast.

In that attack, the enemy had obviously moved in and planted their bombs while we

slept. Our column lost five vehicles within as many minutes when it started to move early in the morning. So much for sentry duties!

Another time, while with Executive Outcomes, I wandered onto a bridge whose approaches had been mined. When the Angolan officer in charge saw where I was, he went apoplectic and shouted that I shouldn't move. But I had to in the end, moving from one rock to another until I was clear.

What we do know about landmine warfare in Angola is that there were almost 40 different types of mines laid in that country from more than two dozen countries.

These included such basics as the Chinese Type 72 anti-personnel mine (sometimes called 72a), which contains 34 grams of explosive and requires between three and seven kilograms of pressure for initiation. The charge is miniscule but it will blow your foot off. Due to

the extremely low metallic content the mine is virtually undetectable using most detectors.

The same with the Yugoslav TMA-3 anti-tank 'Cheese mine', so called because it is round, light-coloured and could be mistaken for a cheese. Its seven kilograms of high-explosive will destroy a tank.

The favourite ploy in some African wars is to lay an anti-tank mine in a road and then place five or six anti-personnel mines all around, each one about a metre from the main charge.



to what was immediately in front of me when suddenly, a rebel pops out of the bush, right there, only metres away.

"He was as surprised to see me as I was him: we had eye contact for about a second." Armed only with a toilet roll, Blaauw threw himself sideways and quickly sprinted for the nearest BMP.

"I had perhaps 20 metres to cover when the ground erupted all around me: the bastard targeted me on full auto. A second later the entire column came under attack as a huge rebel force that had crept up close during the dark hours opened up. I got back OK, but I reckon I must have been as lucky as hell to have done so."

Blaauw was to establish later that it was an attack in battalion strength: about 250 of the enemy were involved. His troops were able to retaliate immediately, something they'd learnt to do many times over. He reckons it was probably their quick reaction time that saved them.

Blaauw didn't come out of it unscathed: he took a flesh wound in his arm, probably from an AK. He's convinced too, that the attack had been pre-empted.

"I'm as sure as hell that the entire group was not yet in its final position. There were apparently some UNITA troops that were held up for some reason in a shallow defile to the north of our position; had they been there as well, things might have been a lot different because they were almost on top of us when the shooting began... some of the enemy were lying three or four metres from where we were.

"All the trees around our positions were cut down by the salvos that followed. Most were

"ARMED ONLY WITH A TOILET ROLL, BLAAUW THREW HIMSELF SIDeways AND SPRINTED FOR THE NEAREST BMP"

completely stripped of their leaves. But then it ended as suddenly as it began because a few minutes later, when more of our IFVs got into the act, the attackers dropped everything and ran."

The colonel was pulled out later by one of the helicopters, had his arm dressed at Saurimo and was back with his unit before nightfall.

Another equally unlikely survival story to come out of the war involved 'Juba' Joubert, who was later to fly combat in Sierra Leone.

With John Viera as his co-pilot, Joubert had their Mi-17 take a hit from a ground to-air missile – probably a Strela MANPAD – a few days after the column had finally taken Cafunfo.

Though the air crews were assured that the area around the diamond town was clear of threat, including missiles, these veterans of several wars tended to remain a little circumspect: it was just as well they did. When they were required to head for the sharp end, they flew in high and came down fast – invariably in a spiral and as steep as their rotors would allow. It was the same on the way out again: straight up and then a swing away when the required altitude had been achieved.

Cafunfo presented the same problems as anywhere else in this ongoing war. The pilots noticed that as soon as they got anywhere near Cafunfo, Savimbi's guns and mortars from across the river would open up. The rebels would shell the landing strip and would keep hammering away as long as there was a helicopter on the ground. On that day, Juba decided that they should put down at an old disused airstrip on the south-western side of town.

His Hip had just delivered its two-and-a-half-ton load and taken on board about a dozen casualties when he prepared for departure to Saurimo. The two helicopters took off again and, as he ruminated afterwards "there was no hanging about when you had people throwing things at you."

The two machines were about 200 metres in the air when several people on the ground saw the brilliant white flash of a missile being launched from the opposite bank.

"SAM!" somebody shouted, pointing at the missile's contrail heading straight for the circling choppers.

Joubert's wing man saw it first, but things happened so fast there was no time for any kind of evasive action. At Mach-2, the missile shot right past his nose and headed for Joubert, hitting his chopper's exhaust just above the starboard engine. The pilot recalled an enormous blast above his head.

Talking about the incident afterwards, both pilots extolled the ruggedness of this Soviet-type helicopter for not being immediately knocked out of the sky. Arthur Walker, one of the veteran merc pilots was always of the opinion that no Western helicopter would take that kind of punishment and come out of it still airworthy.

Having got down onto the deck again, shaken but safe, the crews were able to examine the damage. Altogether five pockets on one of the rotor blades had been blown away and the blast missed the main spar by a centimetre.

Had any one of the Mi-17's five blades been sheared, it would have resulted in the gearbox being torn out and they would have crashed. Exactly that had already happened to 15 other Angolan Air Force Mi-17s in the war by the time that incident took place. Worse, there wasn't a survivor among any of them.

Nor did Hip crews get out alive when three more SAMs destroyed Angolan Air Force choppers in the following six months.

This bush war did not end at Cafunfo, but was to go on until Jonas Savimbi was forced to the negotiating table. Meanwhile, mercenary work continued, particularly with the many aviators, who flew sorties any days that the weather allowed.

For years after the war ended locals would find unexploded ordnance in the vicinity of previous battles

Images: Al Venter, Alamy, Getty



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Heroes of the Victoria Cross

FREDERICK HUGH SHERSTON ROBERTS

“Abandon be damned! We don’t abandon guns!” Hearing the call for help, one young lieutenant advanced under heavy fire

WORDS MARK SIMNER

The Honourable Frederick Hugh Sherston Roberts was born in Umballa, India, in 1872, the son of the well-known Field Marshall Frederick Sleigh Roberts VC. Like so many of his peers, he would be educated at Eton College before attending the Royal Military College at Sandhurst, being commissioned as a second-lieutenant into the King’s Royal Rifle Corps on 10 June 1891. Arriving in India, he would join his regiment at Rawalpindi, and was noted by his fellow officers to be full of enthusiasm and ready to enter ‘with spirit’ into any sports.

Roberts would receive his baptism of fire during an expedition against the Isanzai in 1892. Promotion to lieutenant came on 22 June 1894 and, in the same year, he took part in the Mahsud Expedition in Waziristan, acting as aide-de-camp to Sir William Lockhart, who later mentioned the young lieutenant in his despatches. His next campaign came with the Chitral Relief Expedition of 1895. He would, for this latter campaign, again act as aide-de-camp, this time to Sir Robert Low, and again be mentioned in despatches.

In December 1895, Roberts returned home and took up a position as aide-de-camp to his father in Ireland. However, further active service came in 1898 when he took part in Kitchener’s campaign to reconquer Sudan from the Mahdists and avenge the killing of General Gordon. During

this desert campaign, Roberts had the honour of serving Kitchener as one of his aide-de-camps, and would be mentioned in despatches for a third time. Following the successful conclusions of the re-conquest, Roberts was awarded the Turkish Order of the Medjidie (4th Class). By the time of the Anglo-Boer War, he was, therefore, an experienced officer.

Despite Roberts’ active service experience, he was, in late 1899, about to embark on a very different type of war, and one that he, along with the rest of the British Army, was ill-prepared for. In some ways the Anglo-Boer War was similar to the Crimean War, in that it was, for the time, large in scale and fought

between two adversaries armed with modern weapons, as opposed to the more usual well-equipped British soldiers fighting poorly armed and trained warriors of native armies. There, perhaps, the similarities ended, for the Boers of southern Africa would fight in a very different way to their British adversaries.

Almost two decades earlier, British soldiers and Boer commandos had briefly clashed during the Transvaal Rebellion of 1880-81 – which is sometimes referred to as the First Anglo-Boer War. This had ended in British defeat after only three months of fighting. However, the war of 1899 to 1902 was much larger, lasted a lot longer and saw the deployment of huge numbers of men by both sides. It would also see significant changes in tactics on the side of the British, following a number of serious reverses early in the war.

By the middle of the 1890s both Boer republics – the Transvaal and the Orange Free State – felt that their independence from the British was under threat. Following the Transvaal Rebellion, despite their military victory, the Boers increasingly found themselves unable to conclude treaties with foreign powers without the consent of the British, while the latter had also set about annexing Zululand. The Boer republics slowly became surrounded by British influence, and many felt almost strangled.

One particular issue between the Boers of the Transvaal and the British was that of

.....●.....
“...DETACHMENTS SERVING THE
GUNS OF THE 14TH AND 66TH
BATTERIES... HAD ALL BEEN
EITHER KILLED, WOUNDED, OR
DRIVEN FROM THEIR GUNS ...
AND THE GUNS WERE DESERTED”

– London Gazette, 2 February 1900
.....●.....

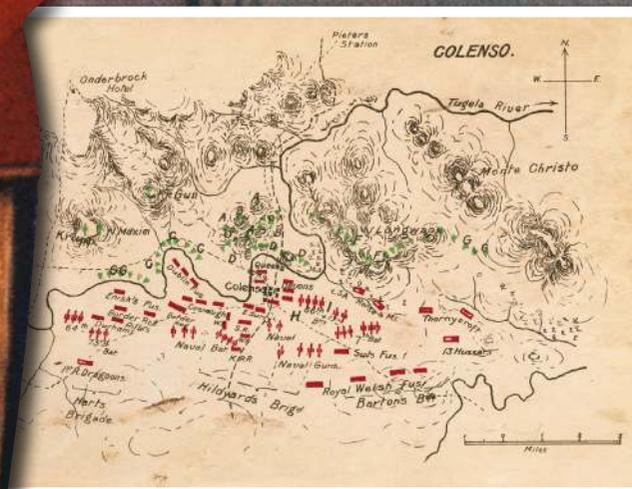
“I HAVE NEVER SEEN ...
THE BULLETS FLY THICKER.
ALL ONE COULD SEE WAS
LITTLE TUFTS OF DUST ALL
OVER THE GROUND, A
WHISTLING NOISE – ‘PHUX’,
WHERE THEY HIT”

– Captain Walter Congreve,
King’s Royal Rifle Corps

Lieutenant the Honourable Frederick Hugh
Sherston Roberts, who was awarded the
Victoria Cross for gallantry acts during the
Battle of Colenso, 15 December 1899



Below: Period map of
the Battle of Colenso,
showing the position of
the British batteries



HEROES OF THE VICTORIA CROSS

the Uitlanders (Outlanders), who were foreign settlers drawn to the Boer republic by the discovery of diamonds along the Orange River in 1867 and gold in southern Transvaal in 1886. These British expatriates were of concern to the president of the Transvaal, Paul Kruger, for they were becoming so numerous that he worried power over the republic risked being transferred to the British, especially if the Uitlanders were ever enfranchised. Voting rights to the foreign settlers were, therefore, refused.

Unsurprisingly, the Uitlanders began to feel discontented with the way they were being ignored and prevented from having a political voice. This issue was used as a pretext for the ill-fated and botched Jameson Raid, led by Leander Starr Jameson, which was carried out between December 1895 and January 1896. The intention of the raid was to spark an uprising amongst the Uitlanders, but it was not successful in its objective. However, it resulted in much increased tension between the British and Boers.

In response, Kruger began to arm his commandos with thousands of newly acquired German Mauser rifles, buying enormous quantities of ammunition along with a number of modern European artillery pieces. Unable to secure political rights for the Uitlanders, the British also began to build up its military forces in Cape Colony. Both sides were, thus, preparing for conflict – and war would finally come in late 1899.

A breakdown in political negotiations came in September, when the British sent an ultimatum to Kruger demanding equal rights for the Uitlanders. Kruger responded with a counter-ultimatum, insisting that British forces be withdrawn from the border of the Transvaal. Neither side relented, and so, on 11 October 1899, the Anglo-Boer War began.

Generally speaking, historians split the war into three phases: the Boer offensive, followed by the British counter-offensive and, lastly, the guerrilla war. It was in the first phase, during a period that became known as 'Black Week',

that Lieutenant Roberts would commit an act of gallantry that would lead to his award of the Victoria Cross. He would, however, pay for the honour with his life.

Hostilities began when the Boers invaded Natal and Cape Colony. At this point, the Boers greatly outnumbered the British, the latter of which had scattered many of its troops across numerous little garrisons. The Boers, however, also split their forces, for they planned to simultaneously lay siege to the towns of Ladysmith, Mafeking and Kimberley. The British, however, had already begun the process of transporting reinforcements to South Africa, including the 2nd Battalion of the King's Royal Rifle Corps – in which was Lieutenant Roberts – which was en route from India.

With the Anglo-Boer War well underway, General Sir Redvers Buller VC arrived in South Africa in command of an Army Corps of three divisions. Among Buller's staff was Roberts, again in the capacity of aide-de-camp on the general's personal staff. Initially, Buller had planned to fight his way directly to Pretoria – the capital of the Transvaal – but with the above-mentioned British garrisons under siege he was forced to attempt their relief by splitting his forces. A number of actions ensued, such as at Belmont and Graspan on 23 November and on the Modder River on the 28th. Initial British successes, however, would be short-lived.

Between 10 and 15 December, the British suffered a number of serious reverses at the hands of the Boers, a period that became known as 'Black Week'. The first action of Black Week was fought at Stormberg in Cape Colony on the 10th, which ended in far greater casualties inflicted on the British than on their Boer adversaries. The second was fought at Magersfontein, also in Cape Colony, on the 11th. Again the action ended in Boer victory and serious loss for the British.

The final action of Black Week was fought at Colenso on the 15th. Advancing on Ladysmith, Buller decided to cross the Tugela River at a place called Colenso in Natal. However,

opposing his advance were thousands of armed Boers under the command of Louis Botha. Things quickly went wrong for the British, as Buller was using inaccurate maps and had failed to conduct a proper reconnaissance of the area. He also failed to ask British forces at Ladysmith to create a diversion in Botha's rear, and a two-day artillery bombardment, begun on the 13th, merely alerted the Boers to the coming attack.

During the ensuing battle, the guns of the 14th and 66th Batteries of the Royal Field Artillery, under the command of Colonel Charles Long, had made a dash forward without support. Here they commenced to fire on the Boer positions, but the latter soon switched their attention to the British gunners and unleashed a heavy fire down upon them. It did not take long for the bullets and shells to tear through the gunners, littering the ground with dead and wounded men. Soon the guns fell silent, short on ammunition and with no one left fit enough to operate them, with the nearest British infantrymen hundreds of yards away and unable to offer assistance.

Watching the plight of Long's batteries was Buller, who called out for volunteers to 'go and help'. Answering this call were Captains Walter Congreve and Harry Schofield, and Lieutenant Roberts. The three officers, accompanied by Corporal George Nurse and six gunners, made for the limbers of the guns which were situated about 500 to 800 yards from the disabled batteries. The men next went out to limber up a gun, during which Congreve felt a bullet slice through his left sleeve, while another went through his right leg; his horse was also shot in three places, falling about 100 yards short of the guns.

As Congreves attempted to get to some shelter from the furious Boer fusillade, he watched as Roberts, who was continuing his attempt to reach the guns, was hit by enemy fire and fell to the ground. Congreves, despite his wounds, made his way over to the critically wounded Roberts and somehow managed to bring him back to safety, both men under heavy fire throughout. Seeing both men struggling, Major William Babbie of the Royal Army Medical Corps had galloped his horse across to render what assistance he could, while under heavy fire. Despite the wounding of the officers, the little party that volunteered to come to the assistance of the wounded gunners and to save their guns ultimately were able to snatch two of the artillery pieces from the clutches of the Boers.

Watching the gallant act of Roberts and his comrades was Buller, who, in his despatch written the following day after the action, recommended him for the award of the Victoria Cross. Sadly, Roberts would never receive his VC, for he died from his wounds less than 48 hours after the battle, aged 27 years. The citation for Roberts' VC was published in the *London Gazette* of the 2 February 1900.

Roberts would subsequently be buried in the Chieveley Military Cemetery at Frere in Natal. Memorials to him can be found at Winchester Cathedral and in the chapel at the Royal Military Academy, Sandhurst. His VC and other medals are currently on display at the National Army Museum in London.

The last desperate attempt to save the guns of the 14th and 66th Batteries during the Battle of Colenso



Lieutenant Frederick Roberts 'rides to retrieve the guns' while under heavy fire at the Battle of Colenso

"ABANDON BE DAMNED! WE DON'T ABANDON GUNS!"

— Colonel Charles Long, Royal Field Artillery during the Battle of Colenso



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HIROSHIMA

“I SHALL NEVER FORGET”

INTERVIEW WITH NORMAN LEWIS

This military bandsman survived the Battle of Crete and the Arctic Convoys but nothing could prepare him for the horrors of nuclear war

WORDS TOM GARNER

Western Japan: 1945. A 23-year-old sailor wanders around a large, desolated city, picking his way through an endless sea of rubble.

There is no life here, only a cold silence and remnants of the utmost horror. For a man who has known almost nothing but the noise of war for the last five years the British seaman can barely comprehend what he is experiencing.

The obliterated city is Hiroshima, the first victim of the nuclear age. The bombing of this place marked a critical turning point in global history and has since become a dire symbol of humanity's capacity for self-destruction. The world still lives in the perilous shadow of Hiroshima and one of those who witnessed the aftermath of the catastrophe was the young sailor, Norman Lewis.

Lewis had already experienced a dramatic war serving in the Royal Navy and was a survivor of the Battle of Crete and the Arctic Convoys. Nevertheless, despite what he had

gone through, nothing could prepare him for what he saw in Japan. Now aged 95, he tells a sobering story of the shocking cost of total war.

A unique naval apprenticeship

Born in 1922, Lewis had grown up with military music: “As a young lad at home, there were boys who were training down the road with a band from the Royal Naval School of Music and I used to watch them on parade on Sunday mornings. When I was about eight the Salvation Army had a group for boys and girls to learn brass instruments and I played there from the age of eight to 14 before I then joined the Royal Naval School of Music.”

The school was founded in 1903 to train musicians to play aboard naval ships, which was a break from convention, because the Royal Navy had previously hired private musicians. Lewis joined the school in 1936 aged only 14 and he was eventually assigned to a specific instrument, “The musical director said to me one day, ‘I think you'll make a wonderful clarinettist.’ I didn't see them being played by the chaps on parade and didn't really know what a clarinet was but it was an instrument that I fell in love with. We would practise for about five hours a

day and they'd expect you to do private practise in the evenings, which took me through to 1940 when I became 18.”

Performing with the stars

Lewis's war began in 1940 when he was assigned to HMS Fiji, a new light cruiser. Although Lewis's official rank was ‘Musician’ (the band equivalent to a private), his entertainment duties took second place to helping to operate a technologically advanced ship. “Not only did we provide all the music on board but in wartime the band had to occupy the transmitting stations, which were in the bottom of the ship. It was there that all the information needed for the guns to fire and hit the target was sorted out by the band. When the marines landed we also went ashore as badly trained medics with stretcher bearers.”

Nevertheless, Lewis's musical duties were important and when he was based at Scapa Flow naval base he had a busy schedule. “ENSA (Entertainments National Service Association) were the professional entertainers for the armed forces and used to send shows up to Scapa Flow. The capital ships would take the better musicians from each ship to form

Below: Norman Lewis aged 25 in 1947. His war had been dramatic and far-reaching, covering the Mediterranean Sea and the Arctic and Pacific Oceans



“THE BOMBING OF THIS PLACE MARKED A CRITICAL TURNING POINT IN GLOBAL HISTORY AND HAS SINCE BECOME A DIRE SYMBOL OF HUMANITY'S CAPACITY FOR SELF-DESTRUCTION”



The infamous cloud over Hiroshima. Smoke billowed 20,000 feet above the city and the burst spread over 10,000 feet at the base of the rising column. Contrary to popular belief this is not the "mushroom" cloud created by the atomic bomb but the result of the ensuing firestorms

Below: The area around Ground Zero at Hiroshima before the bombing. The target is surrounded by 1,000 feet (305 metres) circles

Right: A watch found in the ruins of Hiroshima. The time is fixed at about 8.15am, which was the time the bomb exploded on 6 August

Below: The same area around Hiroshima after the bombing and subsequent firestorm. The grainy image depicts a flattened landscape



into an orchestra of about 15-20. We used to do the shows a week at a time where we'd go ashore to rehearse in the morning and in the afternoons we'd do the shows."

While working with ENSA, Lewis performed with high-profile British entertainers. "The first show I played for was Gracie Fields, who was very famous at the time. She was a lovely lady and that was quite an experience. Then we had Tommy Handley of the BBC radio programme 'It's That Man Again' (ITMA) and there were some classy personalities in that show – wonderful people. There were so many big names that I can't remember them all now."

The Battle of Crete

By August 1940 Lewis was on operational duty and accompanied HMS Fiji to join a convoy to Dakar, West Africa, to fight Vichy France. However, on 1 September Fiji was torpedoed by the German submarine U-32. "We were with the convoy about 19 miles west of Rockall and there were rows of us all along the upper deck. There was a roll-call every day around 4-5pm to make sure that everybody was still on board. At about five minutes to the hour we were waiting to be called to line up when there was this massive explosion. We'd picked up a torpedo but luckily we were able to get back to the Clyde." It took six months to repair Fiji and in 1941 Lewis sailed to the Mediterranean to take part in the Battle of Crete.

Between 20 May-1 June 1941 a huge German airborne assault took the Greek island and forced the Allies to evacuate to Egypt. HMS Fiji became a casualty early on in the battle on 22 May while trying to assist another stricken ship. Lewis remembers the day well: "It was quite a day. We were accompanying HMS Gloucester on a mission to help another ship, HMS Greyhound,

that had been in trouble. When we got to her, the Greyhound was sinking so there was nothing we could do. On the return journey to join the fleet the German forces concentrated on Gloucester first and she went down around 5pm."

Fiji managed to escape the area and sailed approximately 45 miles southwest of Crete when she was attacked by German fighters and bombers. "The Fiji got as far as the safest corner of Crete, but then a German bomber came over. One of the bombs she dropped went down the side of the ship and blew the side in. We went over around 8.10pm."

Fiji sank and Lewis found himself in the water for hours at night with one of his friends. "My main mate Doug and I clung together in the darkness swimming around. Doug had a watch so we knew how long we'd been in the water, which was about four hours. It was dark, we were on our own and it was jolly cold. Doug said, 'Norm, God help us,' but soon afterwards we saw a pinpoint of light in the distance and we knew it was a rescue destroyer."

It took a long time to reach the destroyer and even the last part of the rescue was difficult. "We made our way to that light, it took us about an hour, and we came up against the side of the destroyer. We couldn't climb up the rope ladder because when they're wet they're jolly slippery. We couldn't hoist ourselves on the rope so a chap came down from the upper deck down to a raft that was alongside. He put a noose underneath our shoulders and we were hoisted up one by one."

Two hundred and forty one men had been killed during the sinking of HMS Fiji and Lewis was one of 523 survivors. He remembers the sinking as a nightmarish experience: "Luckily we managed to survive. That time in the water in the dark with just the two of us was

horrifying. Had we not seen that pinpoint of light we would never have survived through the night that's for sure. Somebody was there to help us, I don't know who, but somebody was."

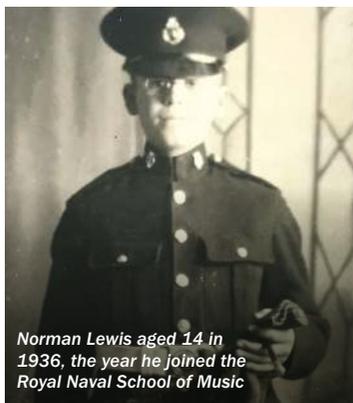
Arctic Convoys

After surviving the sinking of HMS Fiji, Lewis was transferred to the new battleship HMS Anson in 1942 and began a long period taking part in the Arctic Convoys. Between 1941-45 78 Allied convoys sailed to northern Russia to supply the Soviet Union with arms and equipment and they became notorious for the exceptionally harsh conditions that naval and merchant sailors contended with.

Lewis was based in Iceland and convoy duties became part of his routine. "We did a convoy perhaps every month or 5-6 weeks and we'd pick up the convoy off Iceland. The ship would stand away about 10-15 miles away from the convoy and shadow it as it moved on towards Russia."

The journey was dangerous and took Lewis almost to the ends of the earth. "The convoy would go to Murmansk or Archangel and at one point we sailed as far as two days from the North Pole. My job on HMS Anson was up on the bridge looking after the Star Shell control that was firing shells that burst to give light over the sea. The convoys were always in danger of being attacked by submarines and aircraft. On one or two occasions the German capital ships came out. We were on convoy duty for about two and half years with usually a break of about a week roughly every six months."

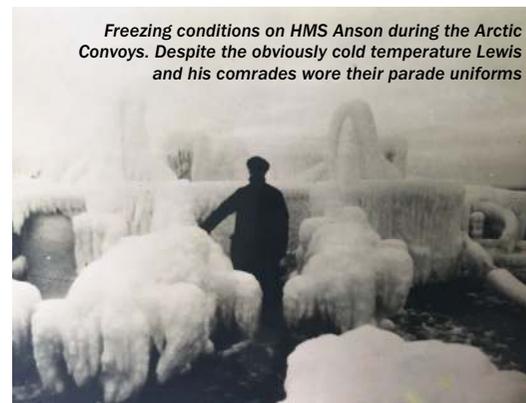
Sailing on the northern seas could be a mixed affair. "The Arctic can be one of the most beautiful seas on which to sail, even in the ice and snow. When the seas were calm and the skies were blue, it was absolutely beautiful



Norman Lewis aged 14 in 1936, the year he joined the Royal Naval School of Music



HMS Anson's guns encased in ice during a convoy to Russia c.1942-43. Lewis recalls that he saw men cry with the cold



Freezing conditions on HMS Anson during the Arctic Convoys. Despite the obviously cold temperature Lewis and his comrades wore their parade uniforms



The band of HMS Anson in the Pacific during 1945. Lewis (middle row, third from right with glasses) and his fellow bandmen entertained liberated POWs from Japanese prison camps



Lewis's first ship was HMS Fiji, a Crown Colony-class light cruiser. He managed to survive both the torpedoing and sinking of the ship

German paratroopers landing on Crete, May 1941



THE BATTLE OF CRETE

THIS BLOODY CODA TO THE GERMAN CONQUEST OF GREECE WAS A UNIQUE BATTLE THAT DEPLOYED SEVERAL MODERN INNOVATIONS

When Germany conquered Greece in April 1941, Crete was a primary target, to prevent the Allies using it as a base for air attacks in southeast Europe. Adolf Hitler swiftly ordered 'Operation Mercury' that was based around an airborne assault by paratroopers of the elite XI Fliegerkorps. This would be the first largely airborne assault in military history but they would meet stiff resistance.

The Allied forces on Crete consisted of 35,000-40,000 British, Dominion and Greek troops that significantly outnumbered the initial 9,500 the

Germans deployed on 20 May. Lieutenant General Bernard Freyberg VC was also the first field commander to have access to ULTRA intelligence and knew the date of the German attack.

Between 20 May-1 June 1941 a fierce battle ensued with the paratroopers taking heavy casualties. The Germans eventually gained air

superiority and sunk three Royal Navy cruisers (including HMS Fiji) and seven destroyers. Their forces increased to 17,500 and the Allies were forced to evacuate, leaving almost 4,000 dead and 11,000 captured. However, although Crete completed the German domination of Europe, it was at the cost of 6,698 casualties.

"THIS WOULD BE THE FIRST LARGELY AIRBORNE ASSAULT IN MILITARY HISTORY BUT THEY WOULD MEET STIFF RESISTANCE"

A burning German aircraft crashes during the airborne invasion of Crete, 20 May 1941



Left: The Allies were able to inflict heavy casualties on the Germans at Crete thanks to advanced intelligence from Enigma machines



and at night you could see the Northern Lights. But on the other hand it can also be an angry, vicious sea. We were on a ship of about 45,000 tonnes but think of the escort vessels that were only 2,000-8,000 tonnes, what sort of a life they must have had I don't know."

The worst problem was the extreme cold – a situation that was exacerbated by poor equipment. "In the really cold weather up north it was absolute hell and I saw men crying with the cold. It is strange that the cold could be so painful but it was and that was because we didn't have any protective clothing. The coat that we wore up there was the one we wore on parade to meet the Queen! It was absolutely crazy but that was the way things were. It was a period of the war that I would never forget. For most of the time it was so painful, it really was."

Despite his own experiences, Lewis feels that others suffered more. "It was the convoys themselves that really suffered. They suffered terrible losses by the submarines. They didn't just go on one convoy – it was sometimes convoy after convoy. Not only were they going to Russia, they were also coming back again. To think what they had to cope with – they were wonderful men."

Tragedy in the Far East

Lewis's services in the Arctic ended when HMS Anson was redeployed. "Because we knew the war was coming to an end we were withdrawn from Iceland and then sent out to the Pacific to arrive in Australia. Luckily for all of us we went out towards the end of the Pacific War. We stopped in Sydney and we were there for a break when the first atomic bomb was dropped on Hiroshima on 6 August and then we learned the second one was dropped (on Nagasaki)."

Shortly afterwards Lewis was sent to relieve Hong Kong. "Two or three destroyers went into Hong Kong and we were part of a landing party there. We used to go out on patrol with the marines at night searching for the odd Japanese soldier in caves and things like that. Many had no idea the war was over."

One of his tasks was liberating POW camps and what he discovered was shocking. "We also relieved about 6-7 Japanese prison camps around Hong Kong. The one I was detailed to relieve with the marines was at North Point. The sights that we saw there were absolutely horrific. When we went through the gates we could see the POWs. Those that could, walked, and those who couldn't crawled. They were happy and some were dancing but it was



Those who survived the initial explosion often suffered horrendous burns or developed radiation sickness and cancer



LITTLE BOY

THE FIRST NUCLEAR WEAPON TO BE USED DURING A CONFLICT

'Little Boy' was a monstrous weapon both in its physicality and explosive power. It weighed almost 4,400 kilograms (9,700 pounds), was over three metres (10 feet) long and had an explosive force of equivalent to 15 kilotons of TNT. The bomb

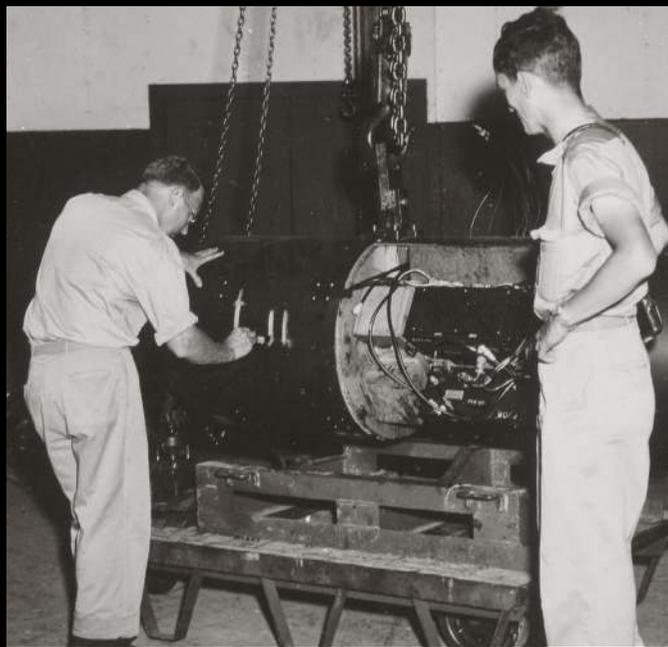
also used 64 kilograms (141 pounds) of processed uranium, which was almost all that then existed. Upon its release from the US B-29 'Enola Gay' bomber on 6 August 1945 it took 43 seconds to hit the ground. Such was its power and perversely

poor efficiency that the resulting explosion used only 0.7 grams of uranium, but it was enough to destroy 90 percent of Hiroshima. However, its most brutal legacy was the direct and indirect deaths of an estimated 200,000-237,000 people from the actual blast and the bomb's effects including burns, radiation, sickness and cancer.

"SUCH WAS ITS POWER AND PERVERSELY POOR EFFICIENCY THAT THE RESULTING EXPLOSION USED ONLY 0.7 GRAMS OF URANIUM, BUT IT WAS ENOUGH TO DESTROY 90 PERCENT OF HIROSHIMA"

Below: Commander A. Birch (left) and Doctor Norman Foster Ramsey open the case of 'Little Boy' during the manufacturing process. Many scientists who took part in the Manhattan Project later regretted their involvement

The deployment of 'Little Boy' on Hiroshima and 'Fat Sam' on Nagasaki arguably shortened WWII but their legacy triggered the Cold War



Survivors of the atomic bomb attack on Hiroshima flee fire storms after the explosion

“NOBODY SAID ANYTHING ABOUT THE RADIATION, OTHERWISE WE WOULDN'T HAVE BEEN INVITED TO GO ASHORE LET ALONE GO TO HIROSHIMA. THERE WAS NO CONCERN IN THOSE EARLY DAYS”

heartbreaking. That was an experience that I wouldn't want again. Over the following days when they had been through the medicals we'd have groups of them come onto the ship and we'd treat them to a good meal. We in the band would entertain them with old songs and have a chance to chat with some of them.”

Lewis found it difficult to comprehend the brutality of the Japanese soldiers. “It's difficult to put into words. When you come from a quiet normal life into wartime and knowing the values that we have and what we hope we live by and then to be faced with this, which was absolutely the opposite... I do realise now that the Japanese have different values but it was difficult at that time to understand how man could do this to man.”

Japan

HMS Anson left Hong Kong for Japan and Lewis found himself in Yokohama to provide music at dinners for heads of the services. While he was in the city Lewis met Japanese civilians and despite what he had seen in the

POW camps he discovered common ground. “There were Japanese people in an American café-restaurant and we conversed with a few of them. Two of them had actually been to Scotland and they could speak English quite well. We had a conversation and they were just like us, just ordinary people. The Japanese had very different values and I realised that when the Japanese armed forces are at war, it's total. Where we might stand back and say, ‘No, we won't do that,’ the Japanese would just go ahead and do it. It's the way they're taught and fight and most of them didn't mind dying. We're all different aren't we?”

Shortly afterwards HMS Anson sailed to the naval port of Kure, which was close to Hiroshima. By this time it was October 1945 and a curious Lewis was given shore leave with a friend called Bill. “I knew about the atomic bomb and we were in the area. I'd seen my hometown Portsmouth after the bombing and I'd seen Plymouth too and that was bad enough. We thought we'd go to Hiroshima and see what the bomb had done. With the help of

Americans ashore we found the railway station and they taught us where to go.”

In a sign of the times, Lewis was unaware of the dangerous effects of radiation fallout. “Nobody said anything about the radiation, otherwise we wouldn't have been invited to go ashore let alone go to Hiroshima. There was no concern in those early days.”

Upon arrival at the nearest station the two friends came across more American soldiers. “They asked, ‘Where are you going?’ so we said, ‘Hiroshima.’ They replied, ‘Jump in the Jeep and we'll take you just outside. You'll need to walk about 10-15 minutes.’ I remember what they then said which was, ‘Be prepared for what you see.’”

Apocalypse

The atomic bomb had been dropped on Hiroshima on 6 August 1945 killing between 60,000-80,000 people instantly and totally destroying more than ten square kilometres (six square miles) of the city. The blast also created many fires that burned for three days

One of the largest buildings to survive the bombing was the Prefectural Industrial Promotion Hall. It later became the Hiroshima Peace Memorial and is now known as the 'Genbaku (Atomic Bomb) Dome'

"I WAS ASTONDED BY MAN'S INHUMANITY TO MAN. IT'S NOTHING TO BE PROUD OF. PEOPLE SAY IT HELPED TO END THE WAR – WELL IT DID, BUT SURELY NOT AT THAT EXPENSE. IT WAS WARTIME, BUT NOT FOR ME"

after the attack, and the combined devastation was unprecedented.

Lewis soon saw this calamitous scene for himself. "The Americans had said, 'Walk until you see a bridge and then you'll be in Hiroshima.' When we got near enough to see the bridge, Hiroshima, or what was left of it, opened up before us and there was nothing. When I say there was nothing, there was nothing standing – it was absolutely flat. There were the remains of one building on the right, and far away to our left we could see the remains of another building. We just couldn't believe it. I'd seen the bombing and destruction at home but nothing could compare to this – it took our breath away."

What struck Lewis as he entered the city was that it was devoid of people. "The population of Hiroshima at that time was about 350,000 people. Bill and I ambled up a road for about three hours just wandering around and we didn't see one Japanese person. The only people we saw were American soldiers and we only saw about half a dozen of those – there was nobody around."

Apart from rubble, Hiroshima presented some strange sights from the blast. "At one point we saw all these 'diamonds' hanging around and we made our way over through rubble. This place was obviously a glass bottle factory because all the bottles were fused together in great lumps. We each took a little piece as a souvenir."

Worse sights followed: "We kept walking and found the remains of a white wall. We stopped and again we couldn't believe what we were seeing. There were these four figures on the wall and people have asked me, 'Are you sure what you saw?' but we knew. It was plain to see

that they were two children and mum and dad. You couldn't see the body parts but that's what it must have been – they were vaporised on the wall. Talk about man's inhumanity to man."

Seeing the vaporised family is something that Lewis has struggled to forget. "You don't see things like this on brick walls and it was like a very bad photo negative. You could see it was a boy and girl and I would suggest they were between three and five and there were parts of mum and dad. I've moved heaven and earth trying to de-see something like that. You're seeing something that shouldn't be there but it was."

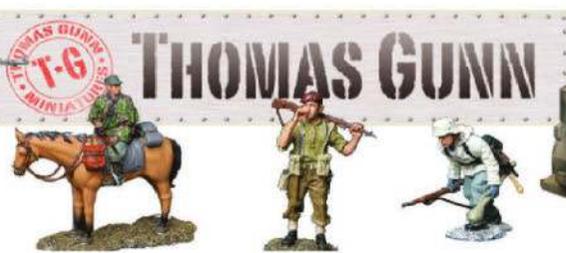
The pair eventually made their way back and told their shipmates what they'd seen but the memory of Hiroshima remains strong. "That was an experience I shall never forget. If one could visualise their own particular town or city just completely destroyed – that's what it was."

For Lewis, Hiroshima was sadly not the end of what had been a hard war, but he remains stoical about his experiences. "We were travelling home in 1946 and got as far as the Red Sea when I received a telegram to say that my dad had passed away. That put the lid on the end of the war, it was a very sad homecoming but I was glad to be home. It was not a good war for me but it was an experience perhaps that I wouldn't have missed because it opened up a young mind to what can happen."

Reflection

The total devastation at Hiroshima has made Lewis feel ashamed at the Allies' actions. "For a young chap of that age it was an experience beyond an experience. Heaven knows we'd seen enough during the war but then to be faced by this at the end at Hiroshima. We Brits prided ourselves that we would never bomb civilian targets but we were a part of it. When that bomb landed it killed some 80,000 people in one go and then in consequence thousands more died. Then of course Nagasaki followed afterwards. I was astounded by man's inhumanity to man. It's nothing to be proud of. People say it helped to end the war – well it did, but surely not at that expense. It was wartime, but not for me."

Lewis is keen to stress the importance of remembering Hiroshima for future generations in an uncertain world. "A story like this should be told to older children – the teenagers at school – just to let them know what happened and God forgive that it never happens again. However, the way things are going at the moment we're treading on ice, certainly between the Americans and North Koreans. These things should be taught to children at school and given the chance you may get it right because they're going to be the bosses in years to come. Something like this must never happen again."



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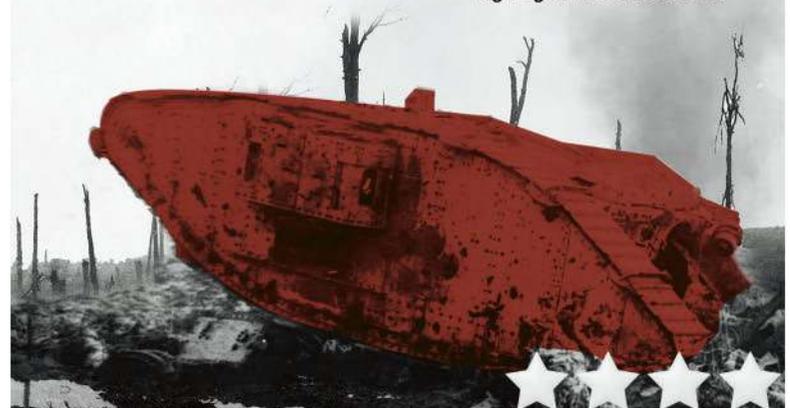
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MIL MI-4 HELICOPTER

The Mil Mi-4 helicopter, known to NATO as 'Hound', became a Cold War workhorse of Soviet and Eastern Bloc forces

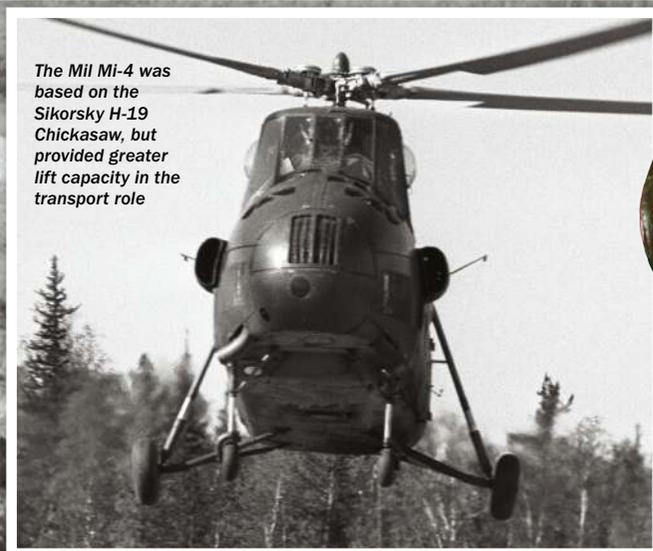
WORDS MIKE HASKEW

Soviet military commanders took note when United States and United Nations forces deployed large numbers of helicopters during the Korean War. It was clearly apparent that the helicopter was a versatile aircraft, performing a variety of wartime tasks, from transport to medical evacuation and ground support. The Soviets showed particular interest in the Sikorsky H-19 Chickasaw, which entered service with the US Army in the early 1950s as its first true transport and airlift helicopter.

The Soviets recognised the future role that the helicopter would play in providing battlefield mobility and theatre-based logistical support. The response to the Chickasaw was the Mil Mi-4, which was later identified in NATO (North Atlantic Treaty Organization) parlance as 'Hound'. The Mi-4 bears a striking resemblance to its American-designed counterpart; however, it was conceived as a more robust aircraft, significantly larger and with greater transport capacity.

Although the Mi-4 was derided as a copy of the Chickasaw, there is a basic rationale behind the Soviet airframe's obvious similarity. Soviet Premier Joseph Stalin became aware of the Red Army's lack of tactical air transport capability sometime in 1951. Immediately, he ordered Soviet aircraft manufacturers to develop a helicopter that would bring transport parity with the armed forces of the West. He allowed just a 12-month window for the country's design bureaus to produce a satisfactory prototype.

Only the Mil Design Bureau, an experimental venture initiated in Moscow in 1947 by engineer Mikhail Mil, an exceptionally talented developer of rotary aircraft, delivered within the allotted timeframe. Obviously, Mil recognised that the basic transport design concept had been validated by the Americans in Korea. Since there was no time to start with a clean slate, Mil seized upon the evaluation of the H-19 in challenging conditions and proceeded with his task. The Mi-4 flew for the first time on 3 June 1952.



The Mil Mi-4 was based on the Sikorsky H-19 Chickasaw, but provided greater lift capacity in the transport role



This Mi-4 utility helicopter sits in a workshop while undergoing maintenance and repair

The Mil Mi-4 is distinguishable from other helicopter types due to its high-set tail boom

“THE MI-4 BEARS A STRIKING RESEMBLANCE TO ITS AMERICAN-DESIGNED COUNTERPART; HOWEVER, IT WAS CONCEIVED AS A MORE ROBUST AIRCRAFT, SIGNIFICANTLY LARGER AND WITH GREATER TRANSPORT CAPACITY”



MIL MI-4 HELICOPTER

COMMISSIONED: 1952 **ORIGIN:** SOVIET UNION **LENGTH:** 26.8 METRES (87.9FT)
RANGE: 500KM (311 MILES) **ENGINE:** SHVETSOV ASH-82V RADIAL
CREW: 2 **PRIMARY WEAPON:** TKB-481M 12.7MM MACHINE GUN
SECONDARY WEAPON: 4 X UB-16-57 ROCKET PODS MOUNTING 55MM S-5 ROCKETS

The Shvetsov ASh-82V radial engine was modified for use in helicopters



“THE 14-CYLINDER, DOUBLE-ROW, AIR-COOLED ASH-82 WAS A RE-ENGINEERED VERSION OF THE AMERICAN-BUILT WRIGHT CYCLONE RADIAL ENGINE”

ENGINE

A single Shvetsov ASh-82V radial engine, adapted from the basic ASh-82 engine for use in helicopters, was responsible for powering the Mi-4, delivering 1,675 shaft horsepower and a top speed of 185 kilometres per hour. A shaft passed between the two cockpit seats and connected to an R5 two-stage, planetary gearbox, which distributed power to the four-bladed main rotor and tail rotor. The 14-cylinder, double-row, air-cooled ASh-82 was a re-engineered version of the American-built Wright Cyclone radial engine and was already a proven powerplant by the 1950s. In service for more than a decade, the ASh-82 had already been installed in several Red Air Force fixed-wing aircraft.



The powerplant and rotor system of the Mi-4 delivers 1,675 horsepower and provides a moderate cruising speed

ARMAMENT

The Mi-4M ground support variant of the Mi-4 and other specialised models mounted a TKB-481M 12.7mm machine gun in a forward position on the lower body. The flight engineer was also tasked with serving as the machine gunner. The TKB-481M was capable of a rate of fire up to 1,400 rounds per minute; however, excessive barrel wear was often problematic, resulting in the installation of an electrical trigger mechanism that restricted fire to 800-1,000 rounds per minute. Some Mi-4s were also equipped with up to four UB-16-57 rocket pods, each carrying 32 55mm S-5 rockets and later the improved S-8.



The bubble turret housing a TKB-481M 12.7mm machine gun was placed forward along the lower fuselage of the Mi-4 ground support variant, the Mi-4M

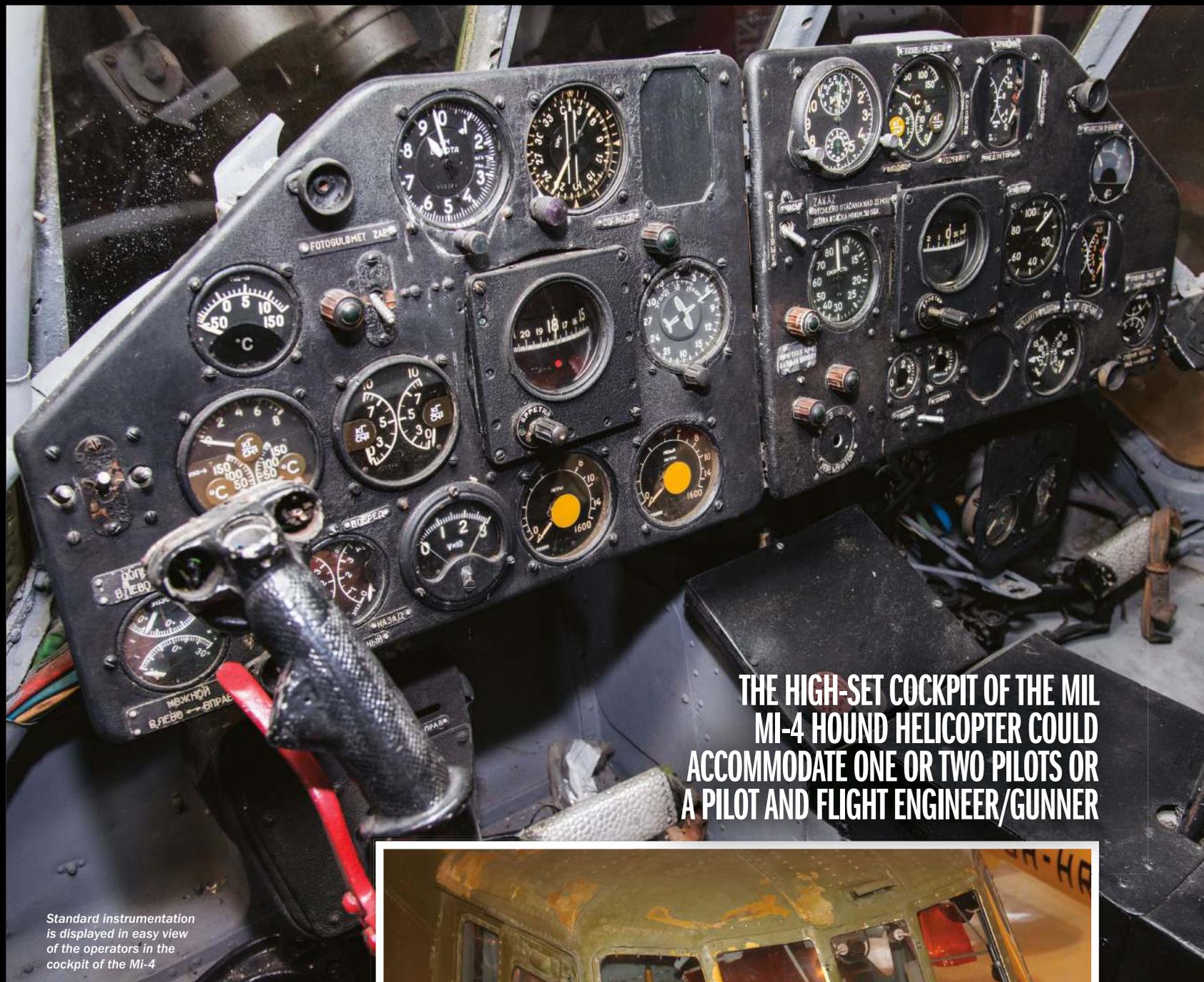


UB-16-57 rocket pods carrying up to 32 55mm S-5 rockets equipped early ground support variants of the Mi-4



“THE TKB-481M WAS CAPABLE OF A RATE OF FIRE UP TO 1,400 ROUNDS PER MINUTE; HOWEVER, EXCESSIVE BARREL WEAR WAS OFTEN PROBLEMATIC”

The external hard points of this Mi-4M helicopter were versatile, capable of carrying a variety of weaponry



THE HIGH-SET COCKPIT OF THE MIL MI-4 HOUND HELICOPTER COULD ACCOMMODATE ONE OR TWO PILOTS OR A PILOT AND FLIGHT ENGINEER/GUNNER

Standard instrumentation is displayed in easy view of the operators in the cockpit of the Mi-4

COCKPIT

The high-set cockpit of the Mil Mi-4 Hound helicopter could accommodate one or two pilots or a pilot and flight engineer/gunner seated side by side. Situated above the cargo hold, the cockpit glass was typically glazed to prevent excessive glare, and visibility was average. A dual set of controls was provided to allow either occupant to fly the helicopter, and the available instrumentation provided for operations in difficult weather conditions or at night. The pilot controlled the Mi-4 with a stick located centrally forward of his seat. Horizon indicators and standard gauges and dials were located on the main panel at eye level.



The pilot's field of vision from the Mi-4 cockpit was generally adequate

The pictured Mil Mi-4 is on display at the Helicopter Museum, Weston-super-Mare. For more information visit: www.helicoptermuseum.co.uk



“THE CARGO AREA PROVIDED ROOM FOR 16 COMBAT-LOADED TROOPS OR A 1,600-KILOGRAM PAYLOAD”



The Mil Mi-4 has seen a wide range of uses during decades of service, including the exploration of Siberia

DESIGN

The Mil Mi-4 helicopter design closely resembled that of the American H-19 Chickasaw, although considerably larger. Its two-level layout featured a flight deck located above the cargo hold and the engine mounted forward in the nose section. The cargo area

provided room for 16 combat-loaded troops or a 1,600-kilogram payload. The cargo hold was fitted with seats that flipped up and was accessible via clamshell doors that opened fully to the rear for the easy loading of vehicles and other material. Later models were equipped with a sling apparatus for the transport of heavy or oversize loads.

SERVICE HISTORY

THE MIL MI-4 HOUND UTILITY HELICOPTER DEMONSTRATED MULTI-ROLE CAPABILITY DURING A LONG SERVICE HISTORY WITH SOVIET AND WARSAW PACT FORCES

Within months of its first flight in 1952, the Mil Mi-4 Hound utility helicopter entered service with the Soviet armed forces. Subsequently it was introduced to the armies of the Warsaw Pact and served with the armed forces of more than 30 countries. By the time production ceased in 1979, more than 4,500 Mi-4 and Z-5 helicopters were completed. The Z-5 was the Chinese-built version manufactured by the Harbin Aircraft Industry Group. The service life of the Mi-4 extended well beyond half a century, and reports indicate that a few may remain in service with the North Korean Air Force to this day.

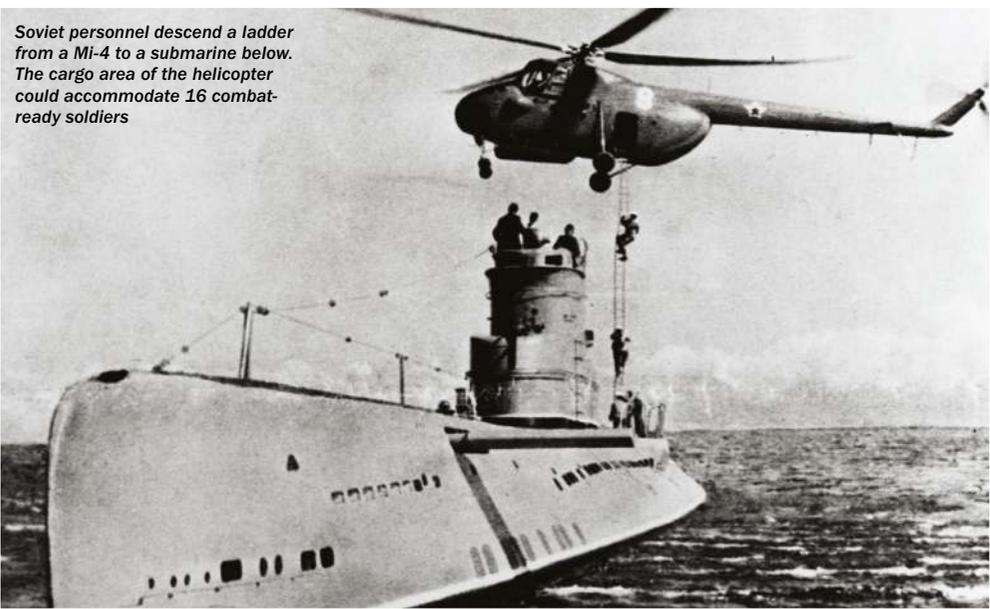
The highly adaptable Mi-4 has been configured as a transport, ground support, anti-submarine, patrol and medical evacuation helicopter, while its application has extended into civilian endeavours such as exploration, fire fighting, and cargo delivery. Much of the Soviet exploration of the vast interior of Siberia during the latter half of the 20th

century was facilitated by the logistic capability of the Mi-4. Modified versions of the helicopter also recorded no fewer than eight speed and altitude records during the 1950s, and its design team received the Lenin Prize from the Soviet government in 1958.

In the combat role, the Mi-4 lifted troops and equipment to Hungary during the civil uprising that shook the Eastern Bloc in 1956. It took part in the Indo-Pakistani War of 1971, airlifting the Indian Army's 57th Mountain Division into action along the Meghna River and transporting a battalion of Indian troops into a combat zone near the city of Sylhet in the first Indian operation of its kind. The Mi-4 also participated in the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in the 1980s.

The specially modified Mi-4 utilised as personal transportation for North Vietnamese leader Ho Chi Minh is on display at the Vietnam Military History Museum in Hanoi.

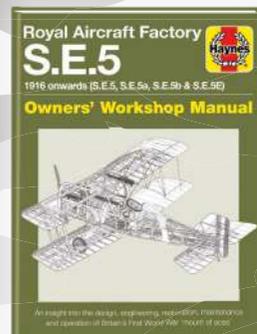
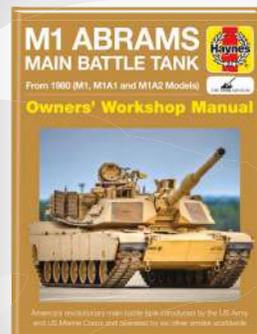
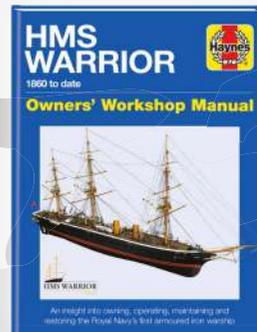
Soviet personnel descend a ladder from a Mi-4 to a submarine below. The cargo area of the helicopter could accommodate 16 combat-ready soldiers



Images: Getty, TopFoto



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REVIEWS

Our pick of the latest military history books and films

DUNKIRK

Starring: Tom Hardy, Kenneth Branagh, Mark Rylance and Cillian Murphy **Director:** Christopher Nolan
Released: 21 July **Certificate:** 12A

AN ELECTRIFYING DRAMA & STUNNING RE-CREATION OF OPERATION DYNAMO

Dunkirk (2017) throws the audience right into the middle of an extraordinary military debacle. A small group of British soldiers walk down an eerily deserted street. They are thirsty, weary and lost. All hell breaks loose when they accidentally stumble into the German line of fire. The Brits are killed, save one (Fionn Whitehead's Tommy). Jumping over a garden fence and ducking for cover, the petrified lad takes his chance of escape by climbing over a shed and immediately is fired upon again by the French, until he cries out "Anglais! Anglais!" The French bid him "bon voyage", somewhat sarcastically, as Tommy is ordered to make his way down to the beach. The tantalising promise of salvation turns into a horrifying vista: hundreds of thousands of troops lined up or sat milling around bored, waiting for boats to take them back home. Then, the drone of an incoming Messerschmitt. Men are killed like sitting ducks. This astonishing opening sequence is a baptism of fire introduction to an epically desperate situation.

Christopher Nolan's blockbuster is a masterwork of cinematic impressionism and sustained suspense. From the very start, the level of intensity is at an unnerving maximum. What's more unusual about *Dunkirk*, however, is its narrative structure. The film comes in three parts that intermingle and ultimately converge across 106 emotionally-shattering minutes (this is Nolan's shortest film in a long time). Often dialogue-free, Hans Zimmer's booming, cacophonous musical score does most of the talking. It rarely lets up, either, working as it does in terrific unison with the gorgeously photographed, albeit often tragic, imagery, the squall-like sound design and mixing. As an immersive experience, *Dunkirk* will be hard to beat this year.

"THE GREATEST WAR MOVIE SINCE 1998'S SAVING PRIVATE RYAN"

'1. The Mole' depicts the boys attempting to get on the boats. The timeframe begins at week one (marking the start of Operation Dynamo and the rescue of some 388,000 stranded personnel). '2. The Sea' occurs over 24 hours, as Weymouth mariner Mr Dawson (played by Mark Rylance), sails off to rescue the BEF (British Expeditionary Force) without authorisation or clearance. Tagging along for the perilous journey across the channel is son Peter (Tom Glynn-Carney) and young George (Barry Keoghan). Midway across to Dunkirk, they pick up the survivor of a U-Boat attack (Cillian Murphy).

Completing the triptych, taking place one hour before the last ship leaves Dunkirk is '3. The Air'. Tom Hardy's RAF Spitfire pilot, Farrier, does his best to ward off the Luftwaffe and protect the remaining lads on the beach and the flotilla. Shot entirely on 65mm film with Imax cameras, the canvas on which the film is staged and presented is positively gigantic. The aerial combat scenes especially – cutting between cockpit claustrophobia and full-frame chases – are heart-in-mouth thrilling.

'Instant classic' is a cliché often bestowed hyperbolically to films we'll forget about in a week's time. *Dunkirk*, however, is the real deal and deserves such an accolade. The greatest war movie since 1998's *Saving Private Ryan*, Nolan's masterpiece grips tight from terrifying start to mournful finish.



— DESTINED FOR WAR —

CAN AMERICA AND CHINA ESCAPE THUCYDIDES'S TRAP?

Author: Graham Allison **Publisher:** Scribe **Price:** £18.99

A TROUBLING LOOK AT THE GROWING POWER STRUGGLE BETWEEN CHINA & THE USA

This fascinating book looks at the developing clash between a dominant America and a rising China, asking the all-important question – will the two superpowers be able to negotiate their changing relationship without resorting to war?

It's a huge question and, given the nuclear arsenals of both countries, one of critical importance to the human race. The bad news is, Allison has identified a pattern that has played out numerous times in history, and which almost always leads to war. This pattern, identified by the Greek historian Thucydides and termed 'Thucydides's trap', is recognisable when an existing dominant state is threatened by an upstart power. Throughout history, this scenario has usually had dire consequences, from the devastating war between Sparta and Athens, to the titanic struggle between Great Britain and Germany in the 20th century.

Allison, a Harvard scholar who has set up a think tank to examine the phenomenon, has identified 16 examples of Thucydides's trap, and in 12 of these war was the result. In this book, Allison looks at the similarities between each case while also examining the examples that did not lead to war in the hope of finding ways of avoiding the trap.

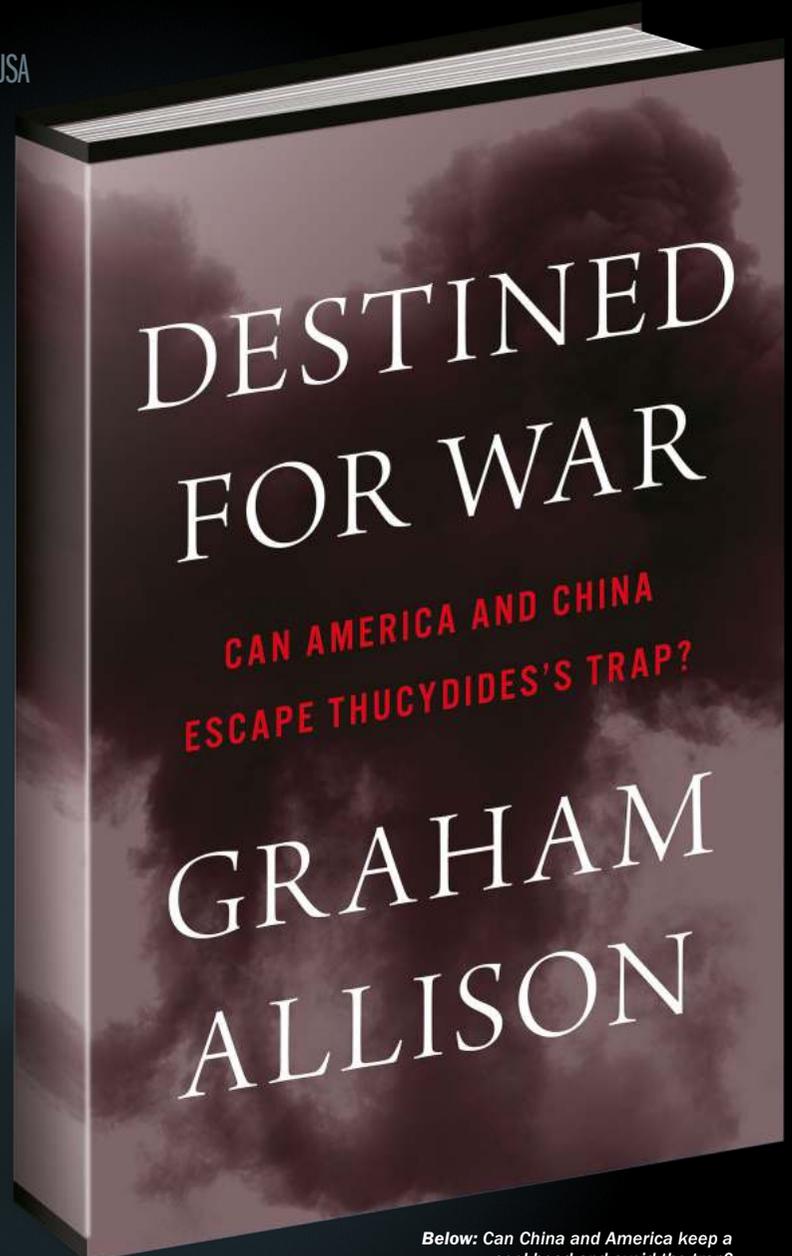
There were many subtle influences at play in each scenario, of course, but one of the strongest recurrent themes is the different world views of the protagonists. The established power, keen to hold on to its status, will be excessively sensitive over any encroachments by the upstart power, while the 'new kid on the block' will have a burning sense of injustice and a firm belief that it deserves more respect and a place at the big table in terms of international relations. It is a toxic mix and leads to misinterpretations, with each side believing it is noble and justified, while its opponent is evil and manipulative.

Today's scenario, with China already surpassing America in terms of GDP in certain methods of measuring the statistic, is coming to a head and is rooted in the fact that China sees its rightful position as being a world leader, if not THE world leader. The past 200 years, where the industrial might of the Western world unseated and humiliated China, is viewed as an aberration, and a short-lived one at that. China wants to recover its position of dominance in Asia, seeing it as nothing more than its intrinsic right.

America, meanwhile, is having to adjust to a world where it will no longer be the supreme power, and the presidency of Donald Trump, with his vow to make America great again, sits uneasily alongside a Chinese leadership vowing to make China great again.

Allison cites nuclear weapons as a mitigating factor against war, but also points out that the weapons were present in the last incarnation of Thucydides's trap. America and the USSR faced the same challenges as Sparta and Athens, and Great Britain and Germany, but did not resort to open warfare. They did, however, invent an entirely new form of war, the Cold War, which involved propaganda, economic warfare and even proxy conflicts around the globe. We could be in for a turbulent time.

“AMERICA, MEANWHILE, IS HAVING TO ADJUST TO A WORLD WHERE IT WILL NO LONGER BE THE SUPREME POWER, AND THE PRESIDENCY OF DONALD TRUMP, WITH HIS VOW TO MAKE AMERICA GREAT AGAIN, SITS UNEASILY ALONGSIDE A CHINESE LEADERSHIP”



Below: Can China and America keep a cool head and avoid the trap?



Image: Alamy

THE IMPROBABLE VICTORY

THE CAMPAIGNS, BATTLES AND SOLDIERS OF THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION 1775-83

Author: Chris McNab **Publisher:** Osprey **Price:** £20

A USEFUL BUT SOMETIMES DISAPPOINTING INTRODUCTION TO THE AMERICAN WAR OF INDEPENDENCE

This beautifully produced book has been prepared to coincide with the opening of the American Revolution Museum at Yorktown, the site of the decisive American victory that effectively ended the Revolutionary War. Its ambition is impressive, attempting to sketch the origins of the war as well as its progress, and providing detail on the men who fought on the battlefields of North America over 200 years ago.

As an Osprey publication, the book is able to draw on decades' worth of excellent artwork produced for more focused titles in the publisher's various series – long-term enthusiasts or scholars of the war will recognise many of the contributions. Also liberally splashed across the book's 260 pages is the magnificent artwork of Don Troiani, making this a really sumptuous read.

In such a short volume, with so much space devoted to the excellent artwork, it is inevitable that the text needs to take a wide view of the conflict, so this book is really best suited as an introduction to the war as a whole. In this way, it can lead readers into more detailed study of campaigns, battles, generals or armies, depending on what catches their attention.

Unfortunately, some of the sections seem less rigorously put together than others. The chapter on the formation of the American Army, for instance, is a very solid introduction, packed with detail. In dealing with the actual campaigns of the war, however, things sometimes go awry. For example, following the fall of Fort Washington, we are told that the loss of the fort 'compromised' American control of the Hudson

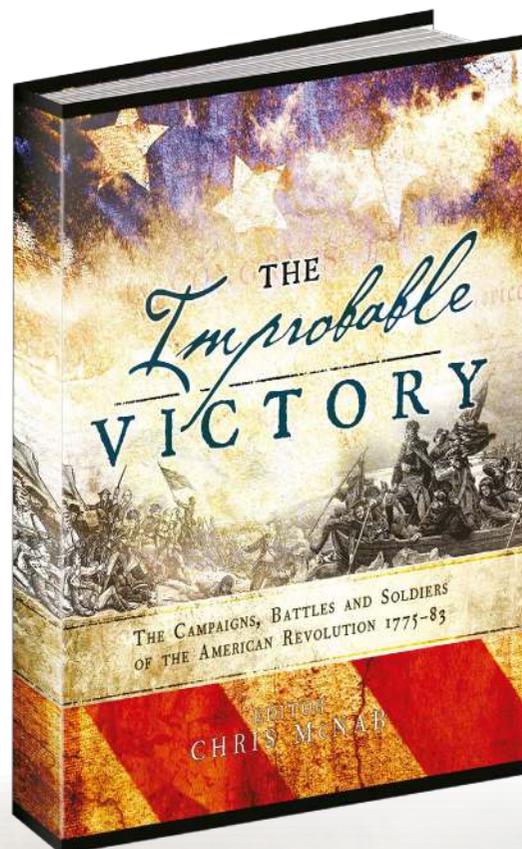
River. In fact, the Americans had never enjoyed control over the river – British shipping had passed the thundering guns of Fort Mifflin without serious damage and a string of sunken hulks, along with a massive chain, had similarly failed to block the vital waterway.

When the book turns to the campaign to capture Charleston and pacify the southern colonies, Clinton is granted an army of 17,000 men, which he would have dearly loved. Britain had been unable to amass that sort of force since the first campaigns of the war and he actually was forced to make do with just 8,000 men. Although he was able to call up some reinforcements from Georgia and New York, his army never approached 17,000.

The book sometimes loses focus, such as when a discussion of the British army in North America diverges into talk of sepoy regiments in the East India Company army, and the decision of Lord Percy to return home following the 1776 campaign was not because, as this book claims, he "could not stomach the war", but because of a bitter falling out with his commanding officer, William Howe.

Percy, in fact, had been thoroughly enjoying his war up until that point.

That's not to say that there aren't telling observations. The author is perceptive in pointing out that the war followed almost an exactly opposite pattern to that usually experienced by the British Army – a string of victories leading to humiliating defeat, rather than early defeats slowly morphing into glorious victory. It is undoubtedly a useful introduction.



“THIS BOOK IS REALLY BEST SUITED AS AN INTRODUCTION TO THE WAR AS A WHOLE”



The artwork in the book really enhances the history being told

— LAND OF MINE —

Certificate: 15 **Director:** Martin Zandvliet **Cast:** Roland Møller, Mikkel Følsgaard, Louis Hofmann, Oskar Bökermann **Released:** 4 August

A DISTURBING POST-WW2 STORY IS DETAILED IN THIS POWERFUL DANISH DRAMA

From 1942 to 1944, Nazi top brass ordered the fortification of Denmark's North Sea coastline with two million landmines. When the Germans surrendered and it came time to clean up their mess, British forces and their Danish counterparts used 'voluntarily surrendered enemy personnel' (aka prisoners of war) to de-mine the beaches, directly contravening the Geneva Convention, which forbade POWs from carrying out such dangerous work. The Danish Brigade oversaw the job and gathered together 2,600 men (most were kids aged between 15 and 18 years old) for the suicidal task. From 11 May to 4 October 1945, nearly a million and a half landmines were cleared. Roughly half of those working in the Minekommando units were killed or severely maimed.

Martin Zandvliet's Oscar-nominated *Land of Mine* (Best Foreign-Language Film) highlights a shameful chapter in the post-war reconstruction of Europe, which saw young boys carrying out a deadly assignment as a form of retribution for the Nazi occupation and war-mongering. Given little in the way of food or shelter, the Danish attitude is fierce: they can drop dead or get blown up for all we care. "Remember what they did," Lieutenant Jensen (Mikkel Følsgaard) curtly reminds Sergeant Rasmussen (Roland Møller), when the legitimacy of what they're doing is brought up. Jensen is the



“MARTIN ZANDVLIET’S OSCAR-NOMINATED *LAND OF MINE* HIGHLIGHTS A SHAMEFUL CHAPTER IN THE POST-WAR RECONSTRUCTION OF EUROPE”

closest thing to a traditional villain role, but he's equally just another embittered and weary soldier who has dehumanised the enemy to such an extent, he does not ever question the morality of the situation. His attitude – one shared by many – is: they put the landmines on the beaches, they can clear them up.

First seen punching the living daylights out a Wehrmacht officer who had the temerity to march to camp with a Danish flag tucked under his arm as a souvenir, Sergeant Rasmussen is the hard-as-nails type overseeing one of the clean-up operations. At first, he shares in Jensen's belief, that what they're doing is totally legit, but Rasmussen is delivered a bunch of boys and they start to die one by one. Day by day, he begins to recognise the inhumanity before him and the false consciousness of moral superiority and the hatred ebbs away. A finely intelligent performance by Møller, the character's progression from steely-eyed officer barking orders at underlings who yearn for home to compassionate man of action, is done without a shred of sentimentality.

Like Henri-Georges Clouzot's *The Wages of Fear* (1953), though swapping trucks loaded with TNT for lads crawling on their bellies and defusing bombs, Zandvliet's use of thriller-style tension is masterful and he fills the screen with powerful images: a starving soldier sticking a piece of wood into the soft sand; a jittery hand carefully unscrewing the cap on a mine; the life-and-death balance as he slowly lifts out the trigger mechanism, or the sudden kaboom of a child blown to smithereens.

Shot on locations once blanketed with Nazi ordinance, *Land of Mine* is a gripping and frankly unmissable film about courage, guilt and the reawakening of morality after the horrors of war.

It's not easy to watch, but *Land of Mine* tells an important story



MORE ON WAR

Writer: Martin van Creveld **Publisher:** Oxford University Press **Price:** £18.99

DOES THE RULE BOOK FOR FIGHTING WARS NEED TO BE RIPPED UP AND STARTED AGAIN? VAN CREVELD THINKS SO

Martin van Creveld is no stranger to controversy. In 2016, the Israeli military historian ruffled feathers in some Western political circles by arguing the case for supporting Bashar al-Assad's regime in Syria as 'the lesser of two evils' in the battle against ISIS.

The Dutch-born author adopts as his hypothesis that it would be suicidal for the West to blindly cling to the moral high ground in the struggle against an enemy that we are ill-equipped to combat with conventional methods of warfare. Van Creveld cites the painful fact that the post-World War II years witnessed the emergence of a new form of conflict. This came in the guise of low-intensity conflicts (LICs), in which powerful nation states often ended up as the losing side. Consider, for example, the humiliation France suffered in Algeria, or the US (and France) in Vietnam, or the ignominious rout of the Soviets from Afghanistan.

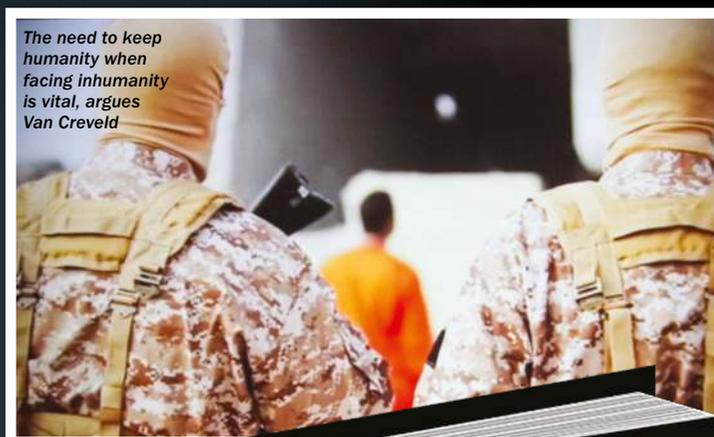
The Middle East conflagration in Syria and Iraq, which is sending shockwaves into neighbouring Muslim countries, is not the consequence of a despot clinging to power in Damascus. It is instead a novel form of terrorism, determined to deploy whatever methods it deems expedient, with no scruples regarding what we hold to be moral or ethical rules of engagement. Their one objective is to attack and destroy all organised state order and territorial boundaries in the Middle East region.

In his latest book, *More on War*, Van Creveld contends that what is needed is a comprehensive replacement for the classic texts on warfare, one that embodies a theory of war for the 21st century. The author does not shrink from bold assertions: "War is the most important thing in the world. When the chips are down, it rules over the existence of every single country, government and individual."

The book takes the reader beyond the standard works on the subject by Clausewitz and Sun Tzu, which Van Creveld considers flawed for overlooking the fact that no two armed conflicts are ever the same and that war is forever changing. In simple, non-technical and jargon-free language, *More on War* delves into complex issues like cyber war, the laws governing armed conflict and asymmetric war. The latter subject is of particular relevance, given that the threat we face today is not within a single civilisation, as was mostly the case before the end of the last European war.

Important factors of this new form of war are legal changes, which have blurred the distinctions between warring states and rebels. Some of these changes have been enshrined in law that restore rights to anti-colonial forces by removing some of the differences between the state and its armed opponents. In such cases, Van Creveld points out, politics becomes so all-pervasive that it engulfs the military conflict. In the current battle to eradicate ISIS, for instance, the issue of civilian casualties illustrates the dilemma Western powers face in finding a way to respond to the threat of Islamist terrorism.

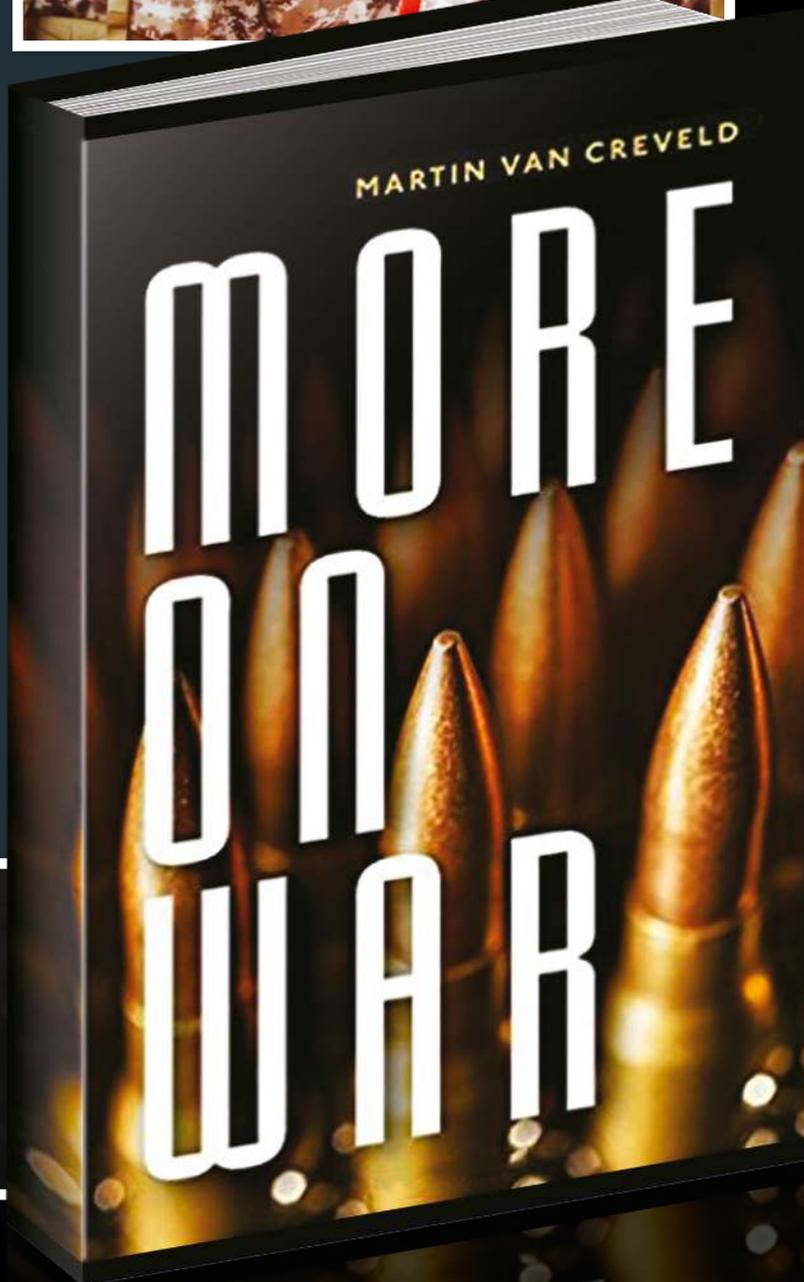
Van Creveld reminds us that war carries the need to preserve our humanity, even in the face of those, like ISIS, who conduct it like beasts. War is the activity most likely to make us forget who and what we are. That is precisely why, he says, it needs to be subject to justice and law.



The need to keep humanity when facing inhumanity is vital, argues Van Creveld



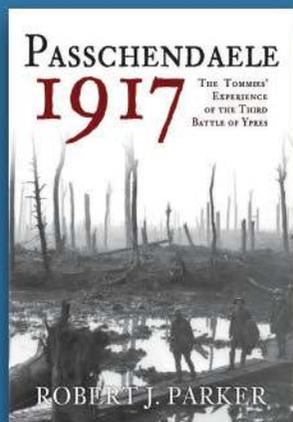
Van Creveld believes the fluid nature of war demands new methods of battle



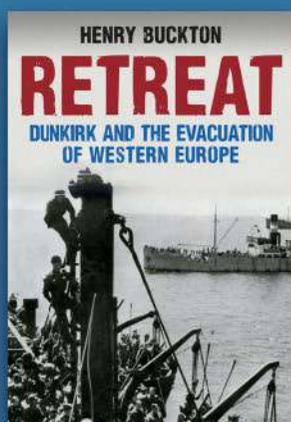
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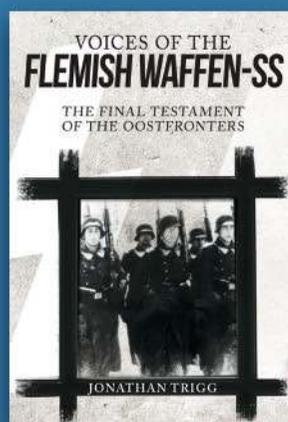
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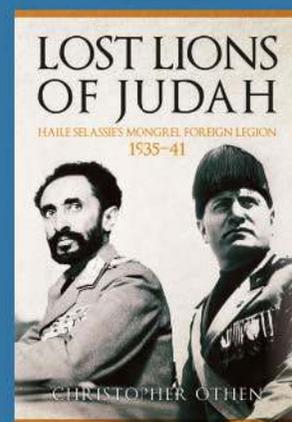
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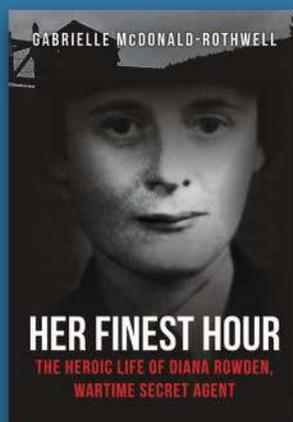
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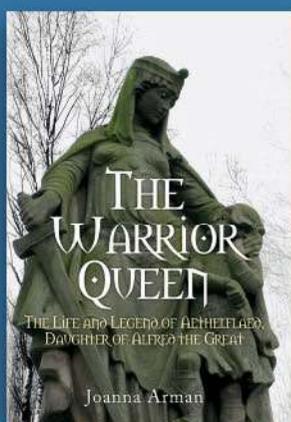
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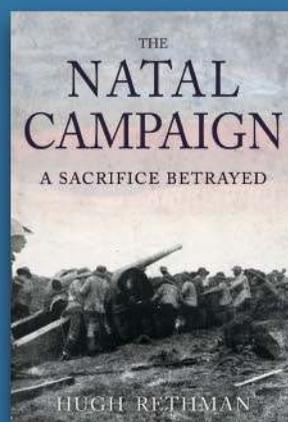
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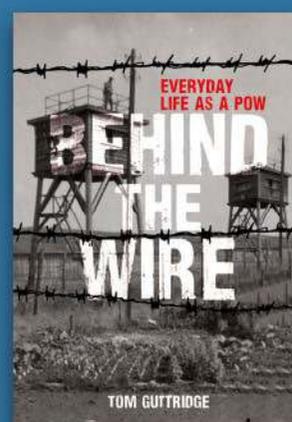
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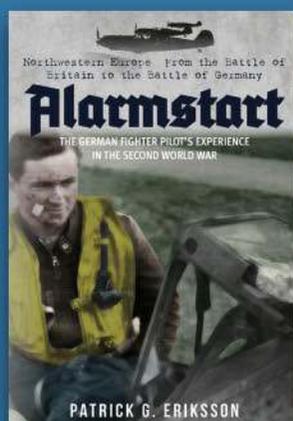
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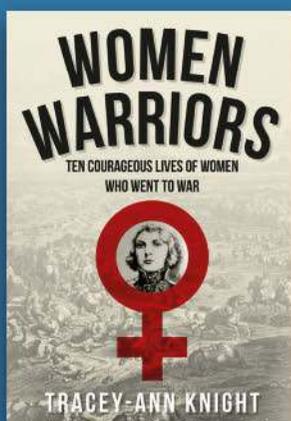
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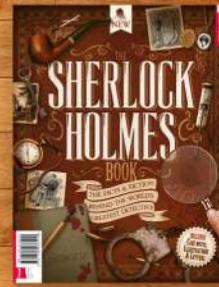
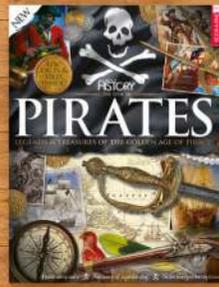
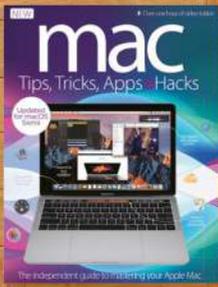


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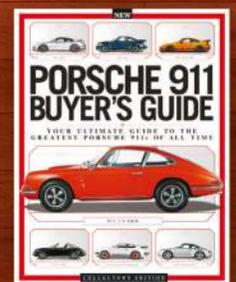
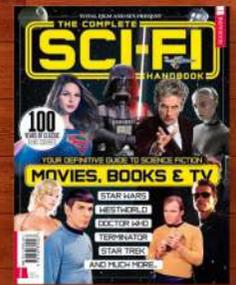
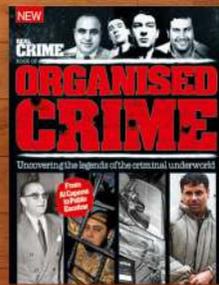
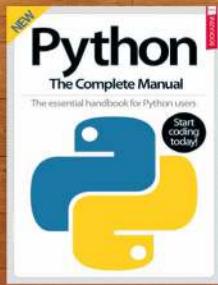
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CIVIL WAR FLAG

This large but extremely rare survival from the 1640s demonstrates how Roundhead regiments were identified



4th Captain's colour, Gell's Regiment of Infantry, 1650.
© National Army Museum



Above: Although he was a Parliamentarian, Sir John Gell was imprisoned in the Tower of London for three years for failing to reveal a Royalist plot in 1650. He later became a privy chamberlain to Charles II

Left: With its large size and bright design, this regimental colour would have been a distinctive banner for Sir John Gell's soldiers to rally around during a battle or siege

During the English Civil Wars (1642-51), all regiments would use colours to distinguish themselves, although the designs could be confusing. Each regiment was commanded by a colonel who would design their flags according to taste and this could include a plain background, heraldic badge or a motto. Most English regimental flags on both sides displayed the Cross of Saint George as a canton and one has remarkably survived from Sir John Gell's Regiment of Foot.

Sir John Gell (1593-1671) was a Parliamentarian colonel of infantry whose soldiers wore grey coats. At one point Gell was commander-in-chief of the Parliamentary forces in Warwickshire, Derbyshire and Staffordshire and his troops took part in many engagements including the sieges of Chester,

Lichfield and the Battle of Hopton Heath. The regiment was exclusively active during the First Civil War and it was disbanded in 1646 after Parliament's victory.

Measuring 192 centimetres tall and 199 centimetres wide, the large flag is double sided with golden yellow silk and linen for the pole sleeve. Parliamentarian colours often used stars as devices and a junior officer such as an ensign probably carried this flag.

Regiments were divided into companies and the pictured flag would have represented one company in Gell's regiment, either the fourth or fifth company. The uncertainty depends on whether the fifth star represented the company captain or Gell himself. Although the heraldry cannot be verified, what is certain is that Gell's family preserved the flag for centuries. This was a remarkable feat for such a delicate item.

"PARLIAMENTARIAN COLOURS OFTEN USED STARS AS DEVICES AND A JUNIOR OFFICER SUCH AS AN ENSIGN PROBABLY CARRIED THIS FLAG"

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Sir John Gell's regimental colour is on display in the newly reopened National Army Museum in Chelsea, London. The museum is open daily from 10.30am-5.30pm (8pm on the first Wednesday of every month).

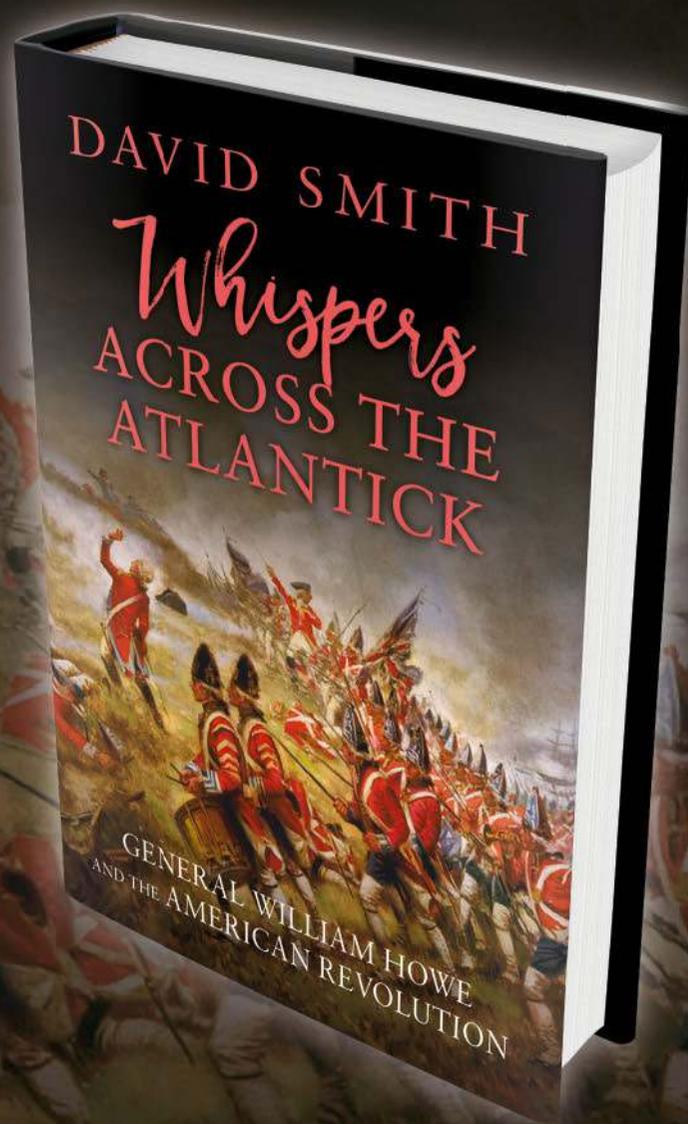
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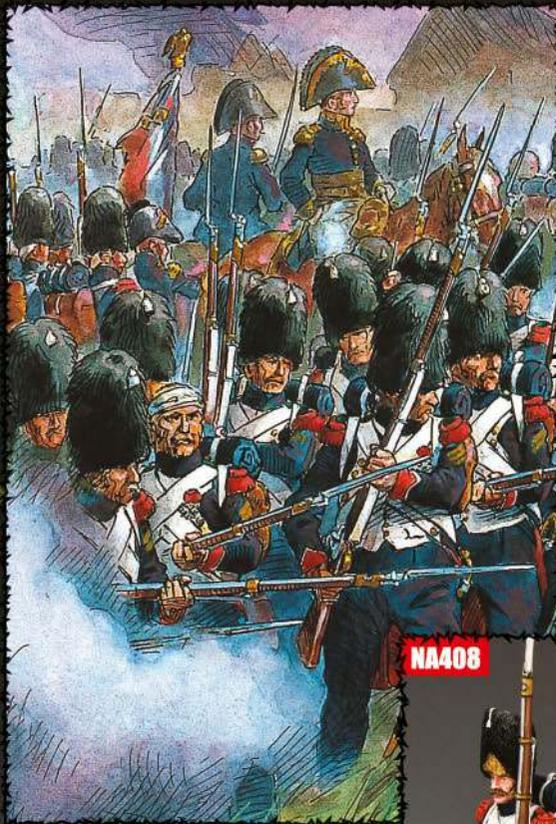
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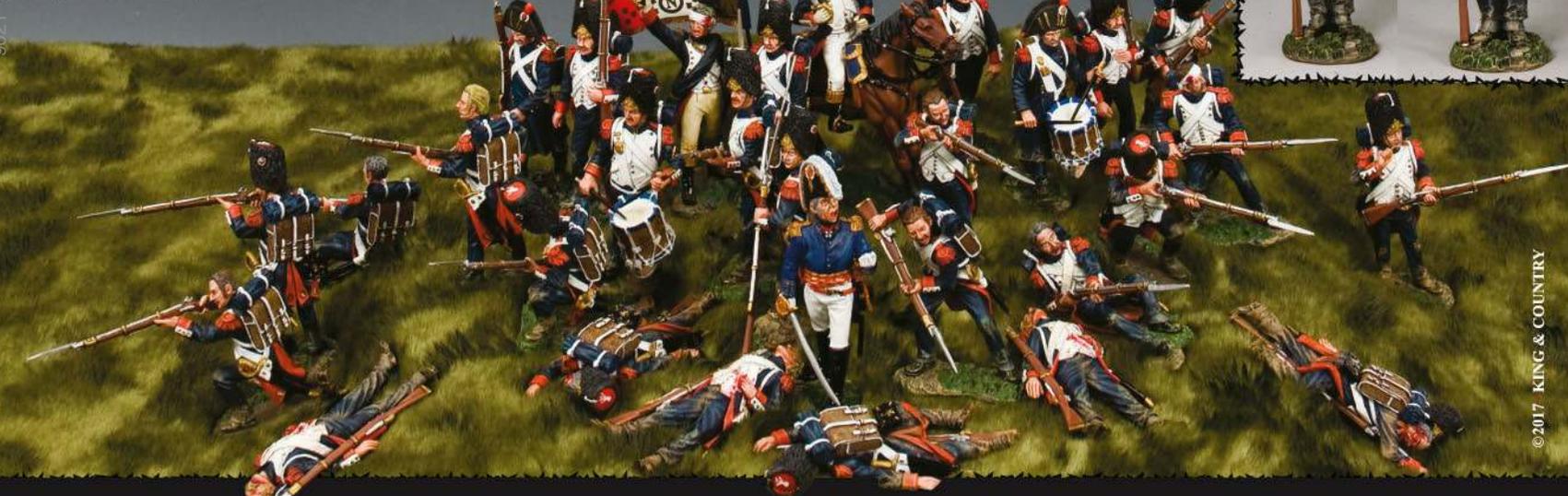
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